PACIFIC ISLANDS HISTORY

journeys and transformations

Brij V. Lal
Editor

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FOR JENNY TERRELL

WITH

GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION

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Preface

THESE PAPERS, like the Workshop which produced them, are influenced by their Canberra context. Some participants were re-visiting the milieu of their youthful graduate studies, inescapably reminded of that heroic era. The original Department of Pacific History was very much the creation of Professor Jim Davidson. The founder of the discipline in Australia, his work blended historical scholarship with political activism. His Department offered the only route to a doctorate, published the only scholarly journal, provided the best political analysis of Island affairs, and in these ways shaped the intellectual agenda of Pacific history and the world-view of his students. Other participants in the Workshop had been brushed lightly by this tradition, and some not at all - but everyone was acutely aware of this invisible aura. More explicitly than in other meetings of Pacific historians, the Davidson tradition was the sub-text of discussion.

No agreed judgement emerged, nor could that be expected, nor would it be desirable. Many other traditions now mingle in our practice, and it may be sufficient here to alert readers to some of them. Davidson's own enthusiasms evolved in response to his new circumstances. He shed, for example, his early interest in comparing Pacific with African colonial questions. Yet he was clearly impressed by the emergence of an autonomous 'African history' discipline during the 1950s and 1960s, and his increasing separation of Pacific Island from Colonial history was intended to achieve a similar level of autonomy. How he might have responded to the poststructuralist challenges of the 1980s cannot be known but would surely have been interesting.

Davidson's advocacy of island-centred research has been taken up in novel ways: the relatively straightforward study of colonial capital is beginning to be complemented by detailed studies of indigenous labour. We are long accustomed to puzzling interactions with anthropology: labour history involves contest with the less familiar (sometimes less congenial) disciplines of sociology and industrial relations. We encounter not only strange disciplines, but also new terrain - the boundaries of Pacific history have become porous and as mobile as the people themselves, blurring the familiar frontiers between the Pacific and Australian, New Zealand,

Southeast Asian and Japanese realms. We were reminded that the English language no longer monopolises the printed text, while the written text no longer monopolises academic debate. More people see film and television representations of the past than will ever read books or journals: many others invoke past events in dance and drama: Islanders live the past as well as formulate it. To represent these popular media in written text is to reduce their infinite diversity to more manageable forms, which may do violence to their content. Equally, as rationalists and sceptics we can hardly do justice to sorcery and other phenomena which we often reduce to categories such as the 'para-normal'. In these matters postmodern analysis mounts formal challenges to the positivism which most of us still practice. Against such critiques there was trenchant defence and re-formulation of R.E. Collingwood's and Geoffrey Elton's classic testaments. Curiously, when Marx made his appearance he was sometimes invoked as a modernist ally against the postmodern ideas which come to us mainly through anthropology. The papers in this collection might suggest that Australia and New Zealand are bulwarks of modernism under siege from North Pacific poststructuralists, but it was evident (and welcome) that cross-fertilisation and apostasy are as common as solidarity.

Reflecting our long association with anthropology, participants played with the language of genealogy, tracing (mainly patrilineal) descent from the clan's individual founders to its current members. Lineal (and especially patrilineal) descent seems increasingly inappropriate to a discipline with so many affines and agnates. The Workshop proceedings represented many more values than those of a single lineage: to describe them we need a broader paradigm, allowing us to acknowledge all our academic ancestors - Marshall Sahlins as well as Davidson, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Kieth Thomas alongside Elton and Collingwood, Sherry Ortner beside Mary Boyd. Instead of a clan genealogy, this begins to resemble an inverted pyramid whose ancestors outnumber its practicing membership. That analogy seems apt in our own era which is de-centred in its institutional support as well as in its scholarly practice. This catholic and eclectic heritage was perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Workshop. Like multiculturalism it can create mistrust as well as broader horizons, and the tensions can be destructive as often as they are creative. Our debates reflect the variety of approaches in our discipline - and they underline our debt to Brij Lal, one of nature's catholics, whose personal flair and deft organisation brought cacophony into occasional harmony.

Donald Denoon
Division of Pacific and Asian History
Australian National University

Introduction

THIS VOLUME of essays by practising Pacific Islands historians is a partial text of a Workshop held at the Australian National University in early December 1991. It is partial in both senses of the word. It is partial in that it represents only a portion of what was presented and discussed at the Workshop. For reasons of space, cost and other contingencies, not all the papers delivered have been included here. And it is partial in that the papers reflect the personal perspectives of scholars working in particular fields, statements of their approaches, concerns and conceptions of desirable directions in current and future research.

The context for the Workshop was the impending 40th birthday of the formal discipline of Pacific Islands history. We felt that the time was ripe for some historiographical stock-taking about the variety of purposes, interests and approaches that now inform our field. To this end, we organised a three-day meeting, and sent an open invitation to all practitioners of Pacific Islands history. An announcement about the Workshop also appeared in the September 1991 issue of the *Pacific History Association Newsletter*. The response to our invitation was overwhelming, suggesting that the sort of exercise we had in mind was long overdue. The result - a large and representative gathering in Canberra of Pacific Islands historians from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the Islands.

We began with an ambitious agenda. We expected the participants to address two related sets of issues. The first was an explicit recognition of, and reflection upon, the particular contexts and circumstances that had led them to the field of Pacific Islands history in the first place and the ways in which these influenced their choice of a subject or approach. Historians, we felt, cannot be separated from their works, and a full consideration of historiography cannot escape discussion of personalities. The second was a discussion of the nature and direction of research in the various sub-specialities that now constitute our field - labour, gender, ethnographic, vernacular histories and the like.

Pacific historians, and perhaps historians generally, appear to be somewhat individualistic, members of a widely scattered tribe who by and large prefer to tend their own narrow patches in their quiet valleys without

being too concerned about the world beyond their immediate horizon. And by and large, they also tend to be reticent and unreflexive about themselves and their craft. They do not often let historiographical preoccupations stand between themselves and their research. Yet we have all at various times been curious to know more about the personal and professional background of our colleagues, if only to gain a more informed perspective on their work. What brought David Hanlon to Micronesian history? Why and how did Sione Lātūkefu decide to become a professional historian of Tonga? What took New Zealand-born Jacqui Leckie to Fijian labour history and Caroline Ralston to feminist study of Polynesian women? What took Clive Moore to the Kanaka labour trade in MacKay and Hank Nelson and Rosaleen Smythe to reel history? In what ways, if at all, did Peter Hempenstall's sojourn in Oxford influence his approach to Pacific history? How did Robert Aldrich get to the French Pacific? What made Bronwen Douglas abandon 'unreflective empiricism' in favour of 'reflexive pluralism?' What principles did Deryck Scarr and Ian Campbell employ in writing their general histories of the islands? The list goes on.

The following pages provide some answers, as all the contributors give varying degrees of detail about themselves and their journeys. They make fascinating reading, and bear out Australian historian Ken Inglis's contention that a lot of history is actually concealed autobiography. Naturally, the particulars vary, but all the reflections show that accident and chance, fate if you will, rather more than careful, calculated choice led us to our present careers. Indeed, not one of the historians in the present volume appears to have made a conscious decision to become a Pacific historian. Although differentiated by age, place of origin and educational and social background, we were all pioneers of sorts who found our separate niches through highly individual and at times eccentric routes. Their obvious human interest apart, the recollections also help us better understand the different approaches, perspectives, ideologies and interests that inform the current practice of Pacific Islands history.

The papers and the vigorous discussions at the Workshop underline the huge transformation our field has undergone in the last two decades. Peter Hempenstall writes that two decades ago 'Canberra controlled the terrain of the subject area through institutional patronage of postgraduate students, possession of the *Journal* and a productive publishing programme'. Canberra still remains an important place for Pacific research, but it has now been joined by other notable centres in New Zealand and Hawaii. *The Journal of Pacific History* now encounters healthy competition from other outlets which publish important scholarly research on the history of the Pacific Islands. *The Contemporary Pacific* and *Pacific Studies*, both Hawaii-based, are two such periodicals. As for university presses which specialise in Pacific books, one is

far more likely to find them outside Australia than within. And a steadily growing number of Pacific historians are getting their graduate training at places other than Canberra. In other words, the centre has been de-centred; and this, the Workshop's participants seemed to agree, is something to be welcomed and celebrated.

Intellectual excitement about Pacific history in the earlier days was 'always tinged with island Romance', writes Kerry Howe, himself an earlier product of the Canberra school, and 'new interpretations were still fundamentally tinted by the notion of Paradise, regardless of whether it be found or lost, enhanced or ruined'. Recent developments in the Islands - the coups in Fiji, the political turbulence in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, the mounting evidence of corruption and mismanagement in most independent states, the growing influence of extra-regional interests in the affairs of the region - have jolted most of us out of our romantic reveries. It can be said quite confidently that the innocence and romance that infused some of the earlier generation of Pacific scholarship have all but vanished in the face of a stark reality: the islands of the Pacific are islands in the physical sense alone.

Nor do we now think of Pacific Islands history as being essentially the history of the South Pacific, as even a cursory examination of research publications and dissertations in the field will show. David Hanlon in this volume and Fran Hezel in his numerous publications elsewhere remind us of the enormous possibilities and rewards of research in the islands north of the equator. Robert Aldrich reminds us of the research possibilities in the French Pacific. Nor is our research effort now as focused on the themes of culture contact, missionisation, trade and the advent of colonial rule in the Islands as it once was. There is still much room for revisionist studies in these areas, as Clive Moore tells us; but, to use one of Gavan Daws's phrases, we are beginning to move the firecart closer to the fireplace. Jacqui Leckie provides a good illustration of the possibilities of contemporary history.

It is also clear that in recent years disciplinary boundaries have become more porous. History's epistemological foundations and frameworks have been challenged, in some cases transformed, through the influence of related disciplines such as anthropology and more recently postmodern and literary criticism. The search for total explanation and complete understanding of historical processes that once characterised our field, the idea that there was a unitary Islander perspective that transcended gender or class, is increasingly contested by radical and feminist scholarship. Our search for total explanations and definitive history is now tempered by a tentativeness and acceptance of partiality. Caroline Ralston's contribution is a timely and sensitive reminder of this as well as of the inevitable politics that attend such exercises. The post-colonial project is not simply about altering the content of colonial studies, argues Hempenstall; it is 'about decolonising ways of

representing pasts that we are engaged with'. Hanlon's contribution, which tackles a subject once thought to be outside the domain of proper historical research, illustrates this new approach well.

To meet these challenges, historians need to become more adaptable and hospitable to new ideas and approaches, argues Bronwen Douglas. She favours a selective appropriation of concepts from other disciplines. 'We cannot ignore the insights of critical theory, structural linguistics and hermeneutics, at least as they are mediated by many anthropologists and some historians'. Her plea fell on fertile ground in some places, especially among some of the younger practitioners in the field, and on hostile ground in others. Theory must grow out of practical experience, says Niel Gunson, echoing Jim Davidson. Deryck Scarr is much less impressed by the claims made by the new approaches. He finds much of neo-Marxism, deconstructionism, psychohistory and ethnographic history reductionist and unenlightening, and their practitioners indefatigable in 'programme-proclaiming, shadow-boxing on thin ice and dragging up supposed roots for repeated inspection and reiterated injunction'. Needless to say, this debate provoked much animated discussion, to the discomfiture of some and to the delight of others. In the end, in a quintessentially Pacific way, we all agreed to disagree, but for how long?

Hank Nelson and Rosaleen Smyth asked the participants to think of more creative ways of presenting their products to the public. Both drew our attention to how films might be used more effectively and even more economically to disseminate information or scholarly research to larger audiences. Nelson made the point that a film or a documentary about the Pacific Islands might reach several million viewers while even a best-selling book on the subject was unlikely to reach beyond a few thousand. Pacific historians who make films moreover 'have a chance to return the product of their research to the people they have studied, and in a form that the people can understand', he suggested. And visual material is a vital aid to teaching in an age when students increasingly gain their knowledge of the past through non-written media. Both Nelson and Smyth are acutely aware of the limitations of the visual media, especially films, for scholarly research and teaching - their lack of reflexivity, their tendency to oversimplify and accentuate the personal and the sensational at the expense of more subtle analysis. But they both made it clear that we were in danger of missing the proverbial boat if we did not re-think our strategy of communicating our research 'to reach more people, communicate better with our students, and perhaps in the process produce better history - on pages, sound tapes or film'.

These introductory remarks do not capture the content of the contributions that comprise this volume; they merely foreshadow some of the larger points they raise. Most certainly, they cannot capture the atmosphere and the free-

ranging discussion that prevailed for three wonderfully stimulating days in the crowded confines of a seminar room in the Research School of Pacific Studies. This volume is a partial, but hopefully representative, record of what was presented and discussed. Inevitably, the papers vary in depth and detail. We have been mindful of the purpose for which they were written and the context in which they were delivered, and have therefore resisted extensive editorial intervention. Thus, the conversational tone of the papers is retained along with the sense that one does not have to be solemn to be serious. It hardly needs saying that this volume is not for critics who carp about the unevenness of collected works. It is a record about ourselves, the students of Pacific Islands history, and about the different ways in which we go about our business. It is a record well worth preserving.

There remains the pleasant task of thanking all those who made the Workshop and this volume possible. The Division of Pacific and Asian History at the Australian National University has our grateful thanks for underwriting the cost of hosting the Workshop. Donald Denoon, Hank Nelson, Niel Gunson, Deryck Scarr, Stephen Henningham and Dorothy Shineberg contributed valuable advice and support, and Dorothy MacIntosh, Julie Gordon and Jude Shanahan helped with organisational matters. Jude also provided invaluable assistance with the typescript for this volume, and we are indebted to her for the fine artwork. A very special thanks to all the participants, especially those from outside Australia, who took the time and trouble to attend the Workshop and help make it the eventful occasion that it undoubtedly was. And finally, a word of gratitude to Jenny Terrell who prepared the manuscript with her usual compassion and skill. Jenny is an exemplary editor, gentle yet firm, and a true friend of all Pacific Islands historians, as contributors to *The Journal of Pacific History* - and that would include many who are present in this volume - would know. This volume is therefore dedicated to her, as a mark of our gratitude for her truly outstanding service to our field.

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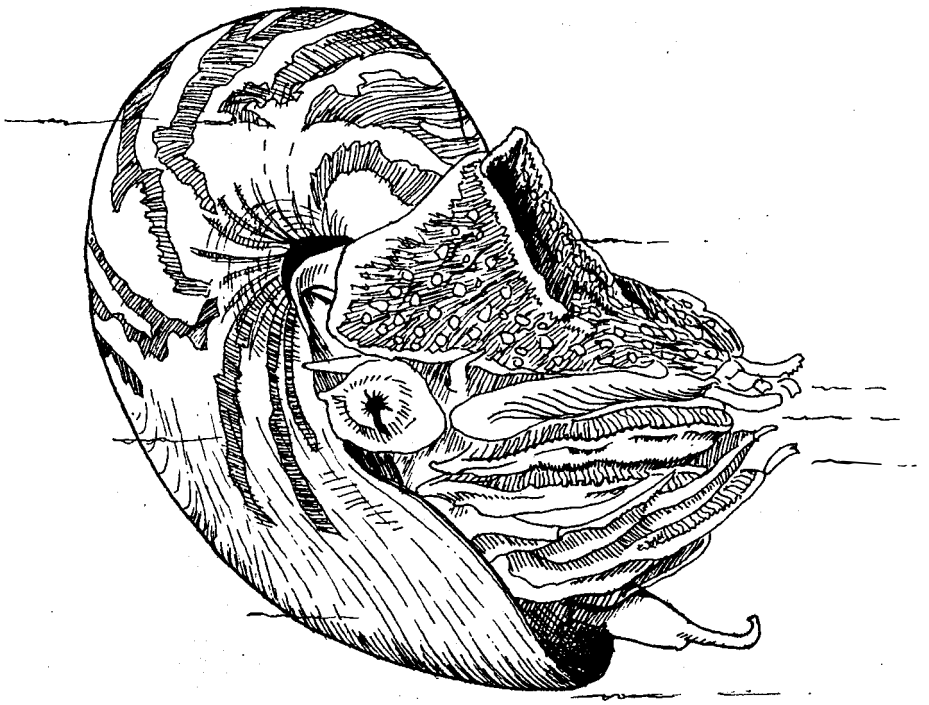


ONE

An Introduction to Pacific History

NIEL GUNSON

BECOMING A PACIFIC historian in the 1950s was as much the result of coincidence as of social determinism. The only and privileged child of parents who valued education, my sights were set at an early age. My father, a farmer who had served in the Australian Light Horse during the first World War, was the thirteenth child of a revivalist Methodist preacher turned respectable urban Congregational minister. Though he had marked anti-intellectual tendencies my father nevertheless appreciated the social advantages of a good education. My mother, a schoolteacher, came from an urban background well rooted in the British nonconformist intelligentsia. Her mother, an Anglican, the last of my ancestors to migrate to Australia (1889), was, as the English say, 'well connected', her family claiming (incorrectly) to be descended from Archbishop Laud.[1]

My mother told me that we were 'lower middle class', an assessment clearly based on our economic circumstances. We were, as the 1930s song claimed, 'nice people with nice manners, but got no money at all . . .live on rabbits' it went on, and certainly rabbit took its turn in the diet though we ate well and lived comfortable lives that belied the severity of the post-depression years. The farm, on Western Port Bay in Victoria, had originally been selected by my father's maternal grandfather in 1868, a largely self-educated blacksmith whose principal interests were theology and astronomy.

I rode five miles on a pony to the local state school in all weathers equipped - in season - with oilskins, jodhpurs, bevelled spurs, a riding crop, and a red peaked cap bearing the motto in golden thread, 'Ever Upward'. I was, and

[1] Perhaps the source of my life-long interest in genealogy and my consequent predilection for Polynesian studies. Although the Laud descent, even collateral, was not proved, I did discover that my mother shared common ancestry (greatly diluted) with such varied figures as Bishop Charles Gore (Oxford Movement), Verrier Elwin (anthropologist), C. J. Cadoux (pacifist theologian), Henry Pelling (labour historian) and at remote degree, Edward Gibbon and Lord Acton.

had to be, a scholarship boy gaining scholarships first to Brighton Grammar School and later to the University of Melbourne including a bursary for tuition at Queen's College where one of my uncles had won the Wyvern gold medal for oratory. This uncle, the Reverend Will Gunson, in some way set the pattern for my future career. Sometime tutor in history and English at the University of Queensland in its early years he also visited the Pacific in his capacity as a local chairman for the London Missionary Society.

My mother, who died when I was 15, had a strong humanitarian utilitarian outlook and hoped that I would pursue a medical course with a view to becoming a pathologist, perhaps serving as a medical missionary in India. My own inclinations, however, were literary and historical. From an early age I had made myself familiar with an outline of world history from our well-stocked book shelves and at about the age of 10 I was puzzling over the genealogical ramifications of the 18th dynasty pharaohs. I also read widely in theology, mythology and - because of my mother's interests - feminist literature.[2] Although I grew up in a Christian atmosphere the only constraints were moral ones. There were no restrictions on my intellectual development.

At the University of Melbourne I was encouraged to transfer to an honours course by Barbara Galley[3] (sister of my Pacific history colleague Norah Forster) and was privileged to read ancient history under John O'Brien, British history under Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Renaissance and Reformation history under Max Crawford and his specialists in that field, including George Yule. When I came to do my fourth year the honours history scholars had three choices: medieval history, Pacific prehistory, and Pacific history. That was the order I chose. As George Yule was on leave, medieval history was cancelled and as only two had given preferences for prehistory that course was also cancelled. Six of us became Dorothy Munro's[4] first seminar class in Pacific history.

Before Pacific history came to be regarded as a discipline in Australia in the 1950s the subject was studied from four different perspectives. Historians of imperialism looked at colonialism, European policy and international rivalry in the Islands; historical geographers looked at the region in relation to

[2] Mainly the novels of Sarah Grand. I became acquainted with Olive Shreiner through her mind-shaping classic *The Story of an African Farm* which - to my mother's mild concern and amusement - I won as a Sunday School prize in May 1943.

[3] Historian of the English Civil War, afterwards married to Australian philosopher Alan Donagan, and long time resident in the United States.

[4] Dorothy Munro, now Shineberg, a graduate of the University of Melbourne, had already pioneered the teaching of Pacific history at the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Sydney, 1948-50, before continuing her graduate studies at Smith College, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Australia and tended to concentrate on the continental countries on the Pacific rim; Australian historians, particularly those with economic interests, looked mainly at Australia's interests in the Southwest Pacific; and there were individual scholars with interdisciplinary interests who still puzzled over the peopling of the Pacific Islands.

The Pacific case-book studies of imperialism were part of a much wider course and so did not constitute Pacific history; the rim studies provided a way of dealing with general regional history at school level - in Victoria, Max Crawford's *Ourselves and the Pacific*[5] was the only text - and the peopling of the Pacific was more likely to be a subject for the red pages of the *Bulletin* than for a university course. The University of Sydney did provide a course in Pacific history but it concentrated on Australia's interests in the region though John Ward was concerned with British interests and Gordon Greenwood with American interests.[6]

The need for a new discipline or orientation in Pacific history was largely the outcome of the Second World War experience. Not only had the War revealed how ill-informed Australians were of their own region but it was also clear that new nations were emerging and this was bound to affect the colonial situation in the Pacific. In the 1950s our view of what constituted the Pacific provided the limits of study. Both in the Australian National University's Department of Pacific History and Dorothy Munro's honours course in Pacific history at the University of Melbourne Indonesia was treated as an essential part of the Pacific world largely because of its place in the regional transition process. Today we are inclined to think of Indonesia as a somewhat reactionary Third World power in Southeast Asia but in the 50s and 60s liberal-thinking Australians were bending over backwards to support an emerging Pacific nation. A series of articles in Australian Presbyterian magazines, for instance, argued strongly against the Dutch plan to hand West New Guinea to Australia.[7] Colonial masters had had their day.

The appointment of James Wightman Davidson (1915-1973) to the foundation chair of Pacific History at the Australian National University in 1949 is generally reckoned as the first step in the formulation of the new discipline. A New Zealander with a strong sense of New Zealand's

[5] R. M. Crawford, *Ourselves and the Pacific* (Melbourne 1943).

[6] John Ward was Challis Professor of History from 1949 to 1979. Gordon Greenwood, then a lecturer, and afterwards Professor of History at the University of Queensland, published *Early American - Australian Relations* (Melbourne 1944). Roger Joyce, afterwards Professor of History at Latrobe University, completed a Master's thesis on Australian interests in the Pacific while at Sydney.

[7] See, for instance, 'The problem of Dutch New Guinea' featured on the cover as 'Our Duty on West New Guinea' in *Presbyterian Life*, Melbourne, 29 June 1956, p.5, and subsequent articles.

responsibilities as a colonial power, Davidson was a Cambridge academic already playing a political role in Samoa as an adviser to the New Zealand government. Jim Davidson is usually credited with having turned imperial history on its head, looking at the colonial experience from the Islanders' viewpoint rather than that of the imperial powers. This may be overstating his position though it certainly represents his emphasis. This was partly anticipated in his Cambridge doctorate, 'European penetration of the South Pacific, 1779-1842', submitted in 1942. Its emphasis on local events and personalities in the Pacific contrasts with the more traditional treatment of the subject by John Ward of Sydney. In the 40s it was Ward's thesis, not Davidson's, which found a publisher.[8]

Jim Davidson's familiarity with indigenous Island affairs and local influences was further developed by his wartime experience in the British Civil Service where he served in the Admiralty's Naval Intelligence Division from 1942 to 1945 and the Colonial Office in 1945. He and his anthropologist colleague Raymond Firth took a major role in preparing the excellent four volumes of the Naval Handbooks on the Pacific Islands.[9] Indeed, owing to Firth's illness, he assumed much of Firth's share. From 1945 until he took up his appointment at ANU in 1950 Davidson was a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, where he combined lecturing in imperial history with serving in the legislature of Western Samoa and acting as a trusteeship officer of the New Zealand government.[10]

Although Davidson had a clear mandate to turn imperial history on its head this was simply a requirement of the times equally applicable to India, Africa or the Caribbean. I believe his greatest contribution was in the promotion of participant history. He was a firm believer in the value of experience. He had little sympathy for the new theories of the 50s unless the proponents had reached them by experience.[11] He much preferred to enlist persons who had the requisite 'grooming' for their subjects. Staff and students were virtually handpicked on this basis. Thus H. E. Maude, an ex-administrator, came to write about the people he had administered, R. G.

[8] John M. Ward, *British Policy in the South Pacific (1786 - 1893)*. . .(Sydney 1948).

[9] [British Admiralty] Naval Intelligence Division, *Pacific Islands* [B.R. 519 (Restricted) Geographical Handbook Series for official use only]. 4 vols. 1943-1945.

[10] For the breadth of his constitutional interests see his monograph, *The Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council*, Studies in colonial Legislatures, vol. 3 (London 1948).

[11] While he believed our work in the Pacific should be informed by African comparisons, he generally felt that African models were inappropriate for the Pacific. He would discuss structuralist and other theories with his students but felt they were peripheral to investigative research.

Crocombe and David Stone were experienced colonial officials,[12] Bernard Smith, an art critic, came to write about the European Vision of the Islands,[13] Sione Lātūkefu came to write about the Methodist Church in Tonga from his own background[14] and Whetu Tirikatene to write about the Ratana movement in which her family had been involved.[15]

Experience, however, was not necessarily expatriate or conditioned Islander experience; it could be suitability according to circumstances and early upbringing. Thus several of us were encouraged to work on particular Christian missions because of our denominational backgrounds.[16] In regard to religious subjects Jim believed one was the better writer for having had doubts or gone through some questioning period. Others were thought well qualified on experiential grounds to write about colonial matters because they came from an educational background which had supplied colonial officials before the war.

I have sometimes wondered if there was some psychological reason, symptomatic of the times, for the great emphasis placed on experience: did it arise out of witnessing the depression? I remember trying to understand why my mother should be so annoyed with me at the age of 14 for writing a short story about New Zealand Maoris. 'You must only write about what you have experienced', she said. I was so humiliated I promptly destroyed a number of highly imaginative essays which had earned me high marks. Manning Clark[17] was also an exponent of the value of experience insisting that suffering was an essential part of the conditioning process.

Even when Davidson was being playfully malicious in his criticism, the barb of his sting usually derived from his convictions. Thus when he told me that my essay on alcoholism amongst Pacific missionaries[18] was like the history of prostitution written by a nun he was suggesting that a reformed or

[12] See R. G. Crocombe, *Land Tenure in the Cook Islands* (Melbourne 1964); David Stone, 'Self-rule in the Cook Islands: the government and politics of a new micro-state', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1971).

[13] See Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* (Oxford 1960).

[14] See Sione Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga: the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and Political Development, 1822-1875* (Canberra 1974).

[15] Whetu Tirikatene (now O'Sullivan) ended her academic career abruptly to return to New Zealand to take her father's place in the national parliament.

[16] Besides myself and Lātūkefu, David Hilliard, an ex-theologue, and David Wetherall, an archdeacon's son, wrote on Anglican missions and Hugh Laracy, an ex-seminarian, wrote on Catholic missions.

[17] Professor of History in the Faculties, Australian National University, until 1974. When I joined the Department Manning was at Canberra University College (now the Faculties) and he, Jim Davidson and Oskar Spate ran a monthly evening history seminar alternating between University House and the Clark residence.

[18] 'On the incidence of alcoholism and intemperance in early Pacific misions', *Journal of Pacific History*, 1 (1966), 43-62.

practising alcoholic would have given a more sympathetic or penetrating account. When he told Sione Lātūkefu that he wrote like a European it was a backhanded compliment because he expected him to write more from his Tongan experience. He was uneasy about my growing interest in ethnohistory believing that historians who used other people's ethnographic data without practical experience ran the risk of falling into the theoretical errors of Edward Tylor and the other early anthropologists. 'You write like an armchair Tylor' meant 'get into the field and check this'.

He wrote in 1971:

> A historian who knows an island society sufficiently well is able - at least in respect of that society - both to dismiss some of the explanations that might be deduced from the documents and to bring an informed imagination to bear upon the creative side of his task. He is able to say: 'Samoans (or Bauans, or Abemamans) could not possibly have thought like that; they *might* have thought like this'. He is more sensitively alert to the clues that his sources may contain than a mere armchair historian can ever hope to be.[19]

Davidson did not like mystique, and that was the message behind his Islands constitution making. He did not like jargon and distrusted those who sought to impose doctrinaire solutions on their problems whether new structuralists or old Marxists. He believed in the search for complete explanation as it was the historian's involvement in the search that was important. Fieldwork thus played an essential role in the Davidson approach to history. Through fieldwork the historian became a participant in history. This is borne out in the fieldwork which he recommended for me: six months spent in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands with the London Missionary Society missionaries to experience mission work at first hand in an area where missionaries were often the only Europeans on an island even though my thesis topic barely touched on that area.

When Jim died in 1973 one obituary writer stated that he had not founded a school of Pacific history but this is debatable.[20] He believed that each discipline provided its own methodology and he at least had set out what that methodology was for Pacific history.

First, the principles and guidelines that have evolved over numerous generations should be respected but, to use his words, they must not be

[19] J. W. Davidson, 'History, art or game? A comment on "The purity of historical method"', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 5 (1971), 118. See also J. W. Davidson, 'Understanding Pacific History. The participant as historian', in Peter Munz, ed., *The Feel of Truth. Essays in New Zealand and Pacific History* (Wellington 1969), 27-40.

[20] Francis West, 'James Wightman Davidson', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 2 (1973), 114-17.

allowed to 'make a prison for the human mind'.[21] Secondly, all practitioners of Pacific history should be participants either directly through occupational experience or by extension of the meaning of participation through fieldwork. Thirdly, practitioners should be informed by the relevant disciplines but never wholly subject to them or their terminology. Fourthly - a corollary to the last - individual historians should work out the finer points of methodology according to their topics and interdisciplinary interests. Fifthly, the discipline should acquire its own disciplinary baggage.

There was, then, considerable room within the Davidson school for variety: social historians, art historians, economic historians and finally ethnohistorians each brought their own brands of expertise to the elucidation of Pacific history. Ethnohistory and its related ethnographic forms of history were a logical extension of an Islands-centred discipline. Harry Maude came to the Department in 1957 and became the leading proponent of what was then called ethnohistory.[22] He also took a leading role in the creation of the disciplinary baggage essential to the success of the Davidson experiment such as *The Journal of Pacific History* (first published 1966), the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (1968) and various bibliographical projects. Experience was again a prime requisite for the new ventures.

When I joined the Department first as a research scholar in 1956 and then as a staff member in 1962 it was a very small cell of enthusiasts. Throughout the Davidson era the long-term academic staff members, except for myself, were either New Zealand or British-born while the majority of students were also non-Australians. This imbalance reflected the greater attention given to Pacific studies in New Zealand and the lingering presence of British colonial officials in the region. Jim Davidson spent a great deal of time in the Pacific largely as a constitutional adviser - in Western Samoa in 1959-61, in the Cook Islands in 1963, in Nauru in 1967-68, in Micronesia in 1969-72 and finally in Papua New Guinea. Payments which he received for his services were channelled into Pacific projects such as the *Journal* and the Nauru Fund established to subsidise the publication of books relating to the Pacific.

The Davidson programme for Pacific history was well under way before I joined the staff. Thus Jim wrote to me on 17 April 1961:

> We have made no real progress with the *Journal of Pacific History*. We are still short of money, but the real reasons for nothing having happened have been my own preoccupation with other things and the fact that Harry will be away next year and therefore would not be able to help with the editing of the first issues. We haven't

[21] J. W. Davidson, 'History, art or game?', 120.

[22] For Maude's work and influence generally see Robert Langdon, 'Harry Maude: shy proconsul, dedicated Pacific historian', in Niel Gunson (ed.), *The Changing Pacific. Essays in Honour of H. E. Maude* (Melbourne 1978), 1-21.

abandoned the project, however, and, if and when we do start, we shall certainly be looking to you for assistance.

A letter from Harry Maude about the same time mentioned his paper *The Evolution of the Gilbertese Boti - an ethnohistorical interpretation* which was 'an experiment to see if Pacific history can be written from oral traditional source material'.[23] The comings and goings of 30 years ago proclaim a pattern familiar to most of us:

> We have a new student from Otago - Wake - whom I had hoped would work on Tonga. But alas Emily (who got her Ph.D last month) has seduced him and he now goes to Malaya, I believe. But another comes later this year to work on exploration and early trade routes. And I found Dorothy Shineberg at work in the Mitchell on the New Hebrides and persuaded her to come up here for a day to see us in action - if her husband, who is a school teacher, can get a transfer to Canberra I think she may join us too.
>
> Dick Gilson has come back from New Zealand a changed man; works like a beaver on a split second schedule and is in imminent danger of completing his thesis.[24]

During the Davidson era I recall only one real challenge to Pacific history as a discipline and this was largely by inference. Peter Munz, Professor of History at Victoria University of Wellington - Jim's old university - published an article 'The Purity of Historical Method' which concluded with the words: 'If the study of non-European history is allowed to become more than an adjunct and *replaces* the study of European history, it will be a ship from which the bottom has been removed: sooner or later it must sink'.[25]

Jim did not wish to replace the study of European history but he felt obliged to comment on the article and insist that Pacific history was a valid discipline in its own right. As he emphasised, 'writing the history of non-European societies is an art that cannot be successfully pursued by those who give unquestioning obedience to traditional academic dogmas'.[26] He was also convinced 'that non-European history should be taught at the undergraduate level (and in schools), because it is relevant to the world we live in and can therefore stimulate the intellect and imagination of students'.[27] While Pacific history was not an extrapolation of European history, as Munz

[23] H. E. Maude to author, 11 Mar. 1961.

[24] Ibid. Richard Philip Gilson was then working on his monumental history of Samoa later to be completed by Jim Davidson (*Samoa 1830 to 1900. The Politics of a Multi-cultural Community*, Melbourne 1970). Although a staff member he was enrolled for the PhD. During Davidson's long absences in the Pacific he administered the Department.

[25] 'The purity of historical method: some sceptical reflections on the current enthusiasm for the history of non-European societies', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 5 (1971), 17.

[26] J. W. Davidson, 'History, art or game?', 118.

[27] Ibid., 119n.

suggested, it was to be regarded as a separate discipline with different purposes and values.

In regard to values one must distinguish between Jim's personal values and those of his colleagues. Within his system one could be a Marxist, a Tory or any other kind of ideologue providing one followed the rules of evidence and was able to argue in defence of one's position. A patrician democrat he himself could easily mix with Islands élites. At the same time he had a natural and easy rapport at village level and was determined to set democratic processes in motion. He believed that Samoa would eventually abandon the *matai* voting system for universal suffrage but he also anticipated their unlikely abandonment of hereditary heads of state.[28] Similarly he had unrealistic hopes for non-segregated suffrage in Fiji.[29]

Davidson's death in 1973 was not really a watershed in the history of the discipline although it probably hastened the process of fragmentation. Certainly the change of the Department's name from Pacific History to Pacific and Southeast Asian History to please the Southeast Asian historians[30] undermined the unique status of the Department and diminished its disciplinary quality.

The Pacific historians who survived or followed the Davidson era were not necessarily direct recruits[31] although most of them would have been influenced in some way. I myself was initially enlisted by Dorothy Munro, now Shineberg, from whose stable came Gavan Daws and Greg Dening.[32] Both Dorothy and Greg would claim Harry Maude as a major influence. Stewart Firth and Peter Hempenstall are almost a third generation in that their supervisor in Oxford was Colin Newbury, one of the early graduates of

[28] In seminars on the Samoan constitution Davidson would put his faith in the democratic processes whereas his anthropologist colleague, Derek Freeman, would predict the survival of Samoan conservative values.

[29] For his views on Fiji see his article 'Constitutional changes in Fiji', *Journal of Pacific History*, 1 (1966), 165-8.

[30] Although Davidson attracted Southeast Asian staff and students to the Department he believed its particular strength (and unique specialisation) should be the Pacific since Southeast Asian studies were well developed elsewhere especially within Australia at Monash University.

[31] Deryck Scarr, one of the longest serving members of the Department, began his career as Davidson's student. His extensive publications, however, particularly those on Fiji, do not necessarily reflect Davidson's views but draw on his own observations and experience as Davidson would have wished.

[32] After obtaining a doctorate in Anthropology at Harvard Greg Dening eventually became Professor of History at the University of Melbourne in 1972.

the Department.[33] Those who came to this Department from New Zealand often owed much to New Zealand historians with a Pacific interest such as Mary Boyd (Wellington), Angus Ross (Christchurch), Gordon Parsonson (Otago) and expatriate Australian Dorothy Crozier at Wellington. Gavan Daws gained experience in Hawaii before returning to Australia as Professor of Pacific History in this Department in 1974. Hank Nelson and Donald Denoon came into the discipline through the history department of the University of Papua New Guinea.

The new mix saw the development of new trends not necessarily in conflict with what had become the establishment. Gavan Daws introduced us to psychohistory, particularly psycho-biography, showing the historian how to manipulate the clinical scalpel and still write good English prose.[34] There was considerable experimentation in gender and peoples' history, attempts to redress the balance of male-oriented and elitist history. Many of these new developments took place in conjunction with the creation of new teaching posts in Pacific history.[35]

While decolonisation studies, initiated by Davidson, became more important to the discipline in the 70s and early 80s there were some historians who were anxious to decolonise Pacific history. No one had dared to murmur 'academic imperialism' when the Department was small but the growth of the discipline and the emergence of graduates of the Pacific-based universities, particularly in Fiji (at the University of the South Pacific) and Papua New Guinea, raised the question: who should write Pacific history? Some historians believed that non-Islanders should confine themselves to non-Islander concerns and that only Islanders should write the history of their people.[36] Others were anxious for Islanders to take on broader themes.[37] Perhaps the most fruitful outcome of this debate was the organisation of

[33] Colin Newbury completed his degree in 1956. After lecturing in New Zealand and Nigeria he became a Fellow of Linacre College, Oxford, in 1960 and began his long association with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, publishing in both the African and Pacific fields.

[34] For Daws's work in this field see his *Holy Man: Father Damien of Molokai* (New York 1973) and *A Dream of Islands: Voyages of Self-Discovery in the South Seas* (New York 1980).

[35] Caroline Ralston, who began teaching Pacific history at Macquarie University, was a gender specialist; Peter Hempenstall at the University of Newcastle applied the theories of people's history to his work.

[36] The principal exponent of this view was R. G. Crocombe, an expatriate, but few Islander historians would now take this view.

[37] For the view that Fijian and Tongan historians should tackle the history of English Methodism see O. H. K. Spate, 'The Pacific as an artefact', in Niel Gunson (ed.), *The Changing Pacific* (Melbourne 1978), 44.

several regional histories through co-operation between Islander authors and academic editors.[38]

Pacific history has come a long way since 1950. A Pacific library in that year could easily be acquired by the devotee. Since then the books, theses and monographs on Pacific historical subjects have grown to enormous proportions. In recent years the number of journals catering for Pacific historians has substantially increased, most of them emanating from the university campuses in Hawaii, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. Before *The Journal of Pacific History* was established Pacific historians mostly published in historical journals such as *Historical Studies - Australia and New Zealand* and interdisciplinary journals such as *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*. Associations of Pacific historians have also been founded both in Australia and North America.[39] Conferences associated with these bodies have also been held. In earlier years Pacific historians participated in the history or anthropology sections of the various scientific congresses. Regional historical associations have also been formed, one of the most active being the Tongan History Association founded at Ha'apai in 1989.

A new piece of baggage has been added to the discipline which helps the historian to become an instant participant in historical moments. Dorothy Munro was using film in her Pacific history classes in Melbourne in the 50s mainly to show inter-ethnic contact for the first time or as an illustrated lecture. The 70s saw Pacific historians themselves involved in film making. The making of *Angels of War* in 1982 using Japanese as well as Australian and Allied footage was a successful attempt to bring historical objectivity to a medium which had been thought of as a vehicle for entertainment or propaganda.[40]

It is probably premature to assess some of the new developments within the discipline. Certainly within the last decade there has been what might be termed a theoretical revolution, an increasing interest in theoretical systems for their own sake. In Davidson's day a retreat into theory would be seen as a withdrawal from participation in history. Davidson had no quarrel with theory but theory had to grow out of experience. One did not impose theory or construct models but looked for complete explanations. This meant that theories were never central but only incidental to partial explanation. The theoretical revolution has manifested itself on several levels. On one it seems

[38] See, for instance, Sister Alaima Talu et al., *Kiribati: Aspects of History* (Suva 1979), and Hugh Laracy ed., *Tuvalu: A History* (Suva 1983).

[39] The Pacific History Association, formed at Martindale Hall in South Australia in 1980, held its eighth conference in 1990.

[40] This initiative was developed by Gavan Daws, Hank Nelson and Andrew Pike at the Australian National University. The Department also offered Visiting Fellowships to several Pacific filmmakers.

to be a search for identity and purpose. On another it represents the interaction between history and anthropology and the blurring of the edges between the two disciplines.

In the search for identity all the questions that have worried conventional historians over the centuries are raised and answered again. Those who agonise too much should remember that many of the answers to their dilemmas can be found through experience, by participation in history. A recent scholar showed great skill and perception in describing a section of Melanesian traditional society but found some of the local beliefs too esoteric to communicate. He seemed to think it impossible for the European to understand the thought process yet a central example which he gave posed no problems for me despite my ignorance of that society.[41] We each bring our own experience to our work and mine happened to be appropriate in that context.

There is no doubt that the work of the most skilled historical anthropologists, such as Marshall Sahlins and Valerio Valeri, is stimulating and rewarding but they frequently tend to ignore the rigorous source assessment which most historians apply automatically.[42] All too often historical anthropologists go into print before they have familiarised themselves properly with the primary sources. This was a common failing of earlier anthropologists. Some of R.W. Williamson's work on the social and political systems of Polynesia is garbled nonsense.[43] Even Irving Goldman was ignorant of much of the historical material[44] and Sahlins openly admits that his early work on social stratification[45] is outmoded. I would suggest, with respect, that from a historian's viewpoint, it was outmoded when it first appeared since historians familiar with much of the manuscript material knew that they could cite examples to prove him wrong.

Even when the most competent historical anthropologists do try to check all the available material the disciplinary methodology of using models is less satisfactory than the historian's methodology of seeking complete explanation.

[41] The case in point involved a miraculous event involving metamorphosis and flying almost certainly indicating belief in the powers of shamans and practices which supported that belief found in many parts of the Pacific. Similarly David Hanlon's puzzlement (see below p. 125) may be explained by his having drunk green kava and the power of hypnotic suggestion.

[42] The term historical anthropologist should probably not be confined to anthropologists as a number of professional historians with anthropological training belong to this school. Those who regard themselves as ethnographic historians are, I believe, the better historians.

[43] See, for instance, Robert W. Williamson, *The Social and Political Systems of Central Polynesia*, 3 vols. (Cambridge 1924), II, 191.

[44] Irving Goldman, *Ancient Polynesian Society* (Chicago 1970).

[45] Marshall Sahlins, *Social Stratification in Polynesia* (Seattle 1958).

Not that complete explanation can ever be possible: the historian's skill is demonstrated in the degree of approximation.

While these recent developments appear to threaten the methodology of Pacific history that methodology itself - because it recognises the relevance of mainline historiography - allows for all manner of transformation and change. But there is plenty of work to be done however it is done. Despite the publishing output of the last 40 years there are still many gaps in our basic knowledge of Islands history leaving aside the need for revisionism, textual and oral evaluation, special studies and updating. If we have a discipline and not Munz's extrapolation we have a field of study that is self-perpetuating and which will be worth pursuing as long as the region holds interest for us.

TWO

The Making of the First Tongan-born Professional Historian

SIONE LĀTŪKEFU

A RELATIVELY IMPORTANT part of the Tongan traditional cultural heritage was the acquisition and passing on of the society's history from one generation to the next. In the absence of a written language prior to European contact, this was all done orally. Unlike the Maoris[1] and Marquesans,[2] there was no formal training nor a class of specialists. In each *kāinga* (village) in Tonga, there was a *tangata 'ilo* (a man who knows) or *fefine 'ilo* (a woman who knows). Such men and women gradually emerged and were recognised and acknowledged on the basis of their ability as the repository of stories of the past, myths, genealogies, poetry and narrative accounts of real or fictitious events.[3] Although not strictly hereditary, they were, as were priests and priestesses, from chiefly families of varying rank.[4] Commoners did not share that privilege until formal universal education was introduced by the missionaries in the 19th century.[5] Written histories of Tonga began with early European explorers, traders and beachcombers and were later continued by missionaries, colonial officials and others. Tongan oral historians acted as informants for such European historians and, later, anthropologists.

There have, then, always been Tongan-born historians - the traditional men and women who had knowledge. None of them had the privilege of gaining professional training as a historian, or the opportunity to write and publish history based upon both oral and documentary research. Becoming

1 Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck), *The Coming of the Maori* (Wellington 1949), 474-5.

2 Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches, Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774 - 1880* (Melbourne 1980), 49.

3 Sione Lātūkefu, 'Oral traditions: an appraisal of their value in historical research in Tonga', *Journal of Pacific History*, 3 (1968), 135.

4 Sione Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga* (Canberra 1974), 4-5.

5 Ibid., 54-6, 74-80.

a professional historian involved a significant departure from the role of the traditional historian, who accepted without question whatever traditional wisdom was passed on.[6] Frequently, such knowledge was biased towards his or her own family or community interests, maintaining their honour and prestige. By contrast, the professional historian must observe strict discipline in collecting historical information, guarding against bias by turning to all available sources, both written and oral, and critically analysing and interpreting them in order to arrive at sound and objective conclusions, as far as humanly possible, seeking the truth no matter how unpalatable it may prove to be. It seems therefore quite appropriate and relevant, particularly for the benefit of younger, up and coming Pacific historians, to describe and analyse how and why I happened to become the first Tongan-born professional historian and to consider some problems and challenges and the effects of these on my views of how Tongan history as well as Pacific history should be researched and written.

The Predisposing Factors

I always had an intense interest in hearing stories and greatly admired and was fascinated by story tellers. I would sit in the company of older boys at night, listening to the tales they told, mostly of sexual exploits, or at funerals, I would be with the old women who spent nights together, engaging in what was known as *po fanaga*, telling legends or fairy tales. Stories from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, and stories from books supplied by the Wesleyan Church were often read to us by our parents, and I can vividly remember, for example, how intensely I was enraged by the cruel treatment given to young Joseph by his older brothers, and how I wept for joy when their later reunion took place.[7] When I was in primary school, a few of us boarded with the headmaster who had a brother[8] who used to tell stories, known as *laipeli*, mainly based on story books, and I greatly looked forward to these *laipeli* sessions and could repeat every story, practically verbatim. I was able to store up a collection of interesting stories and reproduce them exactly as I had heard them told by various story tellers. As I preferred to spend most of my spare time listening to grownups, I had very little time to mix with my peers and became a loner; still, children and young people of all ages occasionally came to hear some of the stories and poems I had memorised

[6] Peter Lawrence, 'Politics and true knowledge', *New Guinea*, 2:1 (1967); Sione Lātūkefu, 'The Modern Elite in Papua New Guinea', in D. Bray and P. Smith (eds.), *Education and Social Stratification in Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne 1985), 33.

[7] *Genesis*, Chapters 37 to 46.

[8] The headmaster of our school, Sione Fīnau Sisifā, later became a prominent minister of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, and his brother, Tevita, later became a prison warder.

such as the poems of my grandfather, Talia'uli Lātūkefu, who was affectionately remembered by the community for his size, beautiful singing voice and outstanding gift for poetry.[9]

In a society where both traditional culture and fundamentalist Christianity expected children to be obedient and unquestioning, I was rather different in my tendency from an early age to question anything which appeared to me to be contradictory. I recall that at the age of eight I questioned my father, who was Sunday School superintendent and a local preacher, about the accuracy of one of the well known stories in the Bible. I was told never to question the Bible, because that was the true word of God. However, this critical and analytical approach continued to grow over the years and later became an important and integral part of my development as an historian.

The Formative Influences

Although we were a poor family, education and academic achievement were highly valued. There was a long tradition of close association with the Wesleyan Methodist Mission and its educational system on the paternal side of my family. My great-grandfather, Tevita Lātūkefu, had been sacked from the public service during the turbulent years of Shirley Baker's premiership in the 1880s because he refused to join the newly established Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga,[10] choosing to remain loyal to the small continuing Wesleyan mission. His father, Uaisele Lātūkefu, had been a prominent supporter of the mission, and some of my great uncles were also in the ministry. My grandfather's only brother, Samisoni Lātūkefu, had become a missionary to the Solomon Islands early this century. My father, Siosiua 'Alopi Lātūkefu, was in fact one of the only two people[11] of their generation in our village to have graduated from Tupou College, the famous Wesleyan post-primary institution. After graduating, he became a church primary school teacher, but in his time, Tongan was the only language of instruction, and when English was later introduced to church schools, my father and many other teachers of his generation were forced to retire. His lack of

[9] My grandfather, Talia'uli, did not have a formal education, for he was half blind, but he is reputed to have had a brilliant and highly acquisitive mind. Judging from his poems, he was extremely well informed. As a poet and keen conversationalist, he was popular among Dr Moulton's ex-students who had studied world history and geography, algebra, geometry, physics, astronomy and high biblical criticism. Through his discussions with them he gained some knowledge of these subjects, including the Theory of Evolution, and referred to them in some of his poetry.

[10] Noel Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga* (Melbourne 1971), 131.

[11] The other graduand was 'Etueni Mo'ungaloa, a one time successful businessman, and a leading lay churchman, father of the Rev. Dr Huluholo Mo'ungaloa, who was President of the Free Wesleyan Church from 1977 to 1981.

knowledge of the English language was always a sore point with him, and he determined to see that his children, particularly his first-born son, received the best education in English.[12] College education was beyond the reach of most families in the village, either because school fees were required or they were simply indifferent to it. My father was prepared to make sacrifices. It was a source of considerable pride to him that I managed to graduate from the college at the age of 16, the age at which he himself had entered Tupou College.

Lātūkefu is a petty chiefly title, a *tehina* (classificatory junior brother) of the Ha'a Ngata Motu'a chiefs. Unimportant at the national level, the title has a significant social standing in the village and district. My father succeeded to the title on the death of his father, Talia'uli, in the early 1930s, and because he had formal education and was well versed in traditional knowledge, he gradually established a reputation as a *tangata'ilo* throughout the country. He became the spokesman for the family, village, local church and occasionally district at important meetings and ceremonies. Often his local friends and visitors from other villages near and far would gather in our house for a *faikava* (kava party) to hear him tell of certain traditions, myths, historical events or repeat a speech he had delivered or a *tālanga* (a discussion or formal argument challenging the right of someone to sit in a certain position in a formal kava circle or the correctness of some ritual performance). Throughout these occasions, I would lie listening, hidden behind the tapa cloth curtain that separated the sleeping quarters of our *fale* from its public area where the *faikava* was held. Since our village, Kolovai, was the centre of the Ha'a Ngata Motu'a chiefs, who are responsible for the royal kava ceremony of the Tu'i Kanokupolu dynasty,[13] knowledge of all these traditions was a matter of pride and keen interest, and from an early age I came to share this.

When I entered Tupou College in 1939 at the age of 12, I realised that in order to do well at other subjects I had to understand English properly. After I finished at the College, I asked the then Principal, the Rev. E.V. Newman, for extra tuition in English. This helped a lot, but the struggle to master the language was not originally linked with any ambition to become a historian, though in retrospect it is clear that without a good grasp of English I could never have succeeded as a historian.

[12] I remember how one day in 1937, when I was 10 years of age, the Chief of our district, Solomone Ata, who had been among the first group of students sent to Newington College, Sydney, by the Principal of Tupou College, and who was at this time Minister for Lands in Tonga, brought an important overseas visitor to Kolovai. My father called me out to look at Ata, who was wearing a smart dark suit, and said to me that he would like me to be like him one day, a remark which I never forgot.

[13] For a discussion of the origin of the Ha'a Ngatamotu'a, see Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, 4.

In 1952 I entered Sia-'a-Toutai Theological College of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. The Rev. R.A. Woodgate, who was then Principal of the College, chose two of us, Siupeli Taliai[14] and myself, to undergo a gruelling three years' personal tuition for the LTh course by correspondence with the Melbourne College of Divinity. Later, he also arranged for our admission to the University of Queensland to study for the BA degree and Diploma of Education. The two of us left for Queensland in 1955, remaining till the completion of these courses in 1958.

At the University of Queensland I majored in history. I was immediately excited by the significant shift of emphasis from the kind of history I had previously learned in Tonga, which emphasised the memorising of facts and dates out of a single history textbook, which had to be reproduced to answer examination questions, to the more analytical approach in which facts had to be carefully collected from a variety of sources, and then critically interpreted as objectively as possible. Though I was fascinated by this different approach, I found it extremely difficult to adopt, particularly in the first year, because it required extensive use of library resources and reading which I was not equipped for, it having never been part of our training in Tonga. All through the three years of study at Sia-'a-Toutai, we had been entirely spoon-fed. We had hardly read a book in its original form, since our tutor had provided us with notes which we would go over with him, and then study for our examinations, which we passed easily. When we started at university we were shocked by the amount of reading required and the realisation that from now on we had to depend mainly on study by ourselves. Despite the additional English tuition in Tonga, I soon realised how lamentably inadequate my knowledge of English was for university study in Australia. In the beginning, I could not follow the lectures clearly, had no understanding of how to read books on my own, and found my reading speed was pitifully slow. Only by working doubly hard, and seeking help from lecturers and fellow students, was it possible for me gradually to overcome some of these basic problems and manage to obtain a BA pass degree in History in 1957 and a Diploma of Education in 1958. The whole intention was to gain the qualifications in Arts/Education and to return to Tonga and do whatever the Church planned for me. However, there were certain individuals who influenced me to seek further academic education and, eventually, specialised training in history.

The first of them was the late Roger Joyce who was one of my lecturers in the Department of History at the University of Queensland, who encouraged me to do an MA degree in History. This idea seemed very exciting to me, and

[14] The Rev. Siupeli Taliai BA, DipEd, LTh later became the first Tongan Principal of Tupou College.

I immediately informed the Rev. C.F. Gribble,[15] the then General Secretary of the Methodist Overseas Mission Department of the Methodist Churches of Australasia, who had taken over the financial responsibility for my studies after our first year at the University of Queensland. Rev. Gribble had known me from when I was about 12, since he had been Principal at Tupou College when I went there in 1939, and later had been Director of Education for the Tongan government while I attended the government Teachers Training College. He was very enthusiastic about the idea of my continuing with postgraduate studies, provided that the Church in Tonga was prepared to give its approval. The Church, however, in its wisdom, decided against the idea, much to my disappointment. Perhaps the idea of my becoming the first Tongan with an MA degree rankled with a small but very influential group among Tongan Church leaders who had tried hard earlier to stop me from going to do undergraduate studies in Queensland. So I returned to Tonga, taught at Tupou College and carried out a variety of other responsibilities, believing that the idea of doing an MA degree was dead.

However, someone else had revived the same idea, without my knowing anything about it until very much later. This was the Rev. Rodger Page, a younger brother of the well-known Australian politician Sir Earl Page. Rodger Page was a missionary in Tonga for 38 years, from 1908 to 1946. He loved Tonga and was held in deep respect and affection by the Tongan people, Wesleyans in particular. This extremely wise and effective, though unassuming, missionary became the most trusted unofficial adviser to the Royal Family and to the government for over 20 years. Page knew my family and its history[16] and my father had been his student. He had already retired, but towards the end of 1950 he returned to Tonga on his last short visit to the country, to relieve the then President of the Church who went on furlough.[17]

He had been interested in my educational development since he first met me in the early 1940s, and he knew that I wanted to work for the Church.

[15] The Rev. Cecil F. Gribble, MA, DipEd, from Australia, was Principal of Tupou College for three years from 1939 to 1942, and was asked by the Tongan government to become Director of Education until 1946 when he returned to Australia to become the General Secretary of the Methodist Overseas Mission.

[16] When I was sent to be head teacher of the Wesleyan primary school at the village of Pelehake in 1945, Page told me that I should conduct the Church choir as well. I explained that I knew very little about singing, let alone conducting a choir. He dismissed this by telling me that when he first arrived in Tonga my grandfather, the distinguished poet, and some of my great-uncles were among the leading musicians in the country, so I should be able to conduct the Pelehake Church Choir! Unfortunately, my attempt to conduct it was disastrous.

[17] After retiring in 1946, he returned to Tonga on a short visit in 1947. A.H. Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, I, *Tonga and Samoa* (Melbourne 1975), 214.

Shortly after his return to Tonga, he asked me whether I was still interested, and then put me forward as a candidate for the ministry, casually mentioning that the Church would later send me to Australia to study.[18] I kept this astounding news to myself, but for weeks I felt I was floating on air, for a young man from a village and from a very poor family to be sent to Australia to study was, at that time, as remote a possibility as going to the moon. Some years later, after I had returned to Tonga from the degree studies in Queensland, Queen Sālote, on one of her visits to Sydney, spoke to Page about a project which she wanted the Traditions Committee to organise, namely to read Tongan materials that were in the Mitchell Library and make extracts from them. Page, who knew of my interest in pursuing an MA degree, suggested that I be sent to Sydney to collect the information, and use some of it in writing an MA thesis. Arrangements were made with the History Department at Sydney University, and early in 1962 with help from friends who raised my fare by holding a concert I returned to Australia.[19] However, something had gone wrong with the arrangements and the Traditions Committee was no longer prepared to support me. The Rev. C. F. Gribble came to my rescue. He and a close friend and colleague, the Rev. Bert Wyllie, the then Master of Wesley College, Sydney University, promised to do everything they could to support me in my studies. They set to work immediately, and secured for me a temporary scholarship from Professor J.W. Davidson, of the Department of Pacific History, in the Research School of Pacific Studies of the Australian National University, enabling me to move to the ANU in Canberra for my MA degree at the end of March, while they sought and obtained a Commonwealth Scholarship for me a few months later. The Commonwealth Scholarship enabled me for the first time in my life to study full-time without worrying about other obligations, and I continue to feel grateful. The scholarship I had held in Brisbane had been a partial one, which did not fully cover expenses. My family had been expected to supply funds for clothing, books and pocket money, which they were, of course, unable to afford. Consequently I had to find work, mainly gardening, at weekends and university breaks, to earn enough for my needs. The timely and very much needed help from the Rev. Gribble and Bert Wyllie did a great deal to enable me to continue my studies. Without their support and confidence in me, I might never have succeeded.

[18] It took five years for this to materialise when Siupeli Taliai and I left Tonga in 1955 to study at the University of Queensland.

[19] My very close friend, Lōsini Koloamatangi, who was then head teacher of the Wesleyan primary school at Mu'a where I was head teacher from 1949 to 1952, and his extremely able wife, 'Aunofo, organised this concert among the people of the district, to whom I feel deeply indebted for their generous support, without which I would not have been able to return to Australia.

Problems and Challenges

There was still no thought of becoming a professional historian. Because I did not have an honours BA degree, I had to do an MA Qualifying course in history, in the School of General Studies, ANU, as a prerequisite.[20] This was normally a two year course, but because my BEd degree from Queensland was, at the time, a postgraduate degree, I was allowed to do the MAQ course in one year, 1962.

After this I embarked on the research for an MA thesis with the same department at the beginning of 1963. A regular departmental seminar, comprised of the postgraduate students and staff, began immediately, in which students were required to present seminar papers on topics related to their theses. Under the leadership of Professors Manning Clark and Ken Inglis and other very able members of staff, these seminars were both stimulating and frightening, especially when papers were subjected to critical analysis and questions from expert historians, particularly in Australian or European history. I was spared the harshest treatment, for everyone, staff in particular, was a little less insensitive with overseas students and, as well, they were not familiar with my topic. However, we learned a lot about research and thesis writing from students' papers and the rigorous criticism to which they were subjected.

I chose as my topic 'The influence of the Methodist missionaries on the political development of Tonga, 1826 to 1875'. I chose 1826 because it was the beginning of the continuous impact of the mission on the way of life of the Tongan people, while 1875 was the year of the promulgation of the Tongan Constitution.[21] Professor Davidson supported the idea, and Dr Niel Gunson, an authority on mission history in the Pacific in his department, was designated as my supervisor, for the History Department within the School of General Studies at that time had no Pacific historian. The specific topic for my thesis therefore came out of discussions with Niel Gunson, who suggested drawing up a tentative plan for the thesis, which I should present as a seminar paper. This proved an invaluable strategy, for with some necessary modifications later, this original plan remained the basis of my thesis. Following Gunson's advice, I began by reading secondary sources on the history of Tonga and the Methodist mission in particular. This helped with the drawing up of the tentative thesis plan. Having never previously done any serious research or thesis writing, I consulted copies of theses in the Department of Pacific History to see their format, organisation, documentation

[20] The School of General Studies was renamed The Faculties later, and the MAQ course a BLit course.

[21] Lātūkefu, *Church and State*, 28, 204.

and so on. I set to work vigorously and enthusiastically, and towards the end of May 1963 I submitted three chapters to my supervisor. The first was a discussion of Tongan traditional polity, the second dealt with the impact of European contact including the London Missionary Society mission and the third examined critically the background of the Methodist missionaries. In the first chapter I added to the information collected from books and records my own personal knowledge of Tongan culture. My knowledge of the language was also very helpful, in explaining clearly the political use of certain common words which had been overlooked or misunderstood by foreign writers.[22]

Gunson, of course, read through the preliminary drafts of each chapter, making corrections and useful suggestions which helped me to rewrite them. He must have been pleased with them since he submitted them to Professor Davidson who, after reading them, passed them on to his senior colleagues Harry Maude and Francis West for evaluation. Apparently they were all sufficiently impressed by them to recommend to the university that I should drop the MA altogether, and expand the thesis for a PhD degree. Towards the end of 1963 I was given a PhD scholarship by the Australian National University.

The psychological and emotional effects of this quite unexpected development were enormous, though tempered by the shocked realisation of the seemingly impossible task ahead. Gunson pulled no punches in making me aware of what challenges lay before me during the next three years. It was then that the idea of my becoming a professional historian began to dawn on me. I was by then familiar enough with academic training to realise the possibility of getting articles or eventually a PhD thesis published.[23] When the initial excitement eventually died down and serious research had to begin, it became abundantly clear to me that certain inherent problems had to be faced and overcome if my studies were to be successful.

When I had the first opportunity to discuss what I had already written with Harry Maude, whose academic background was in anthropology, he indicated that in my discussion of the Tongan traditional society I should have used the anthropological terms for some of the structural concepts which I had

[22] An example of this is the use of the term *kāinga* which normally means 'relation' or 'relative'. See C.M. Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary* (London 1959), 244. It also has a political usage, referring to the group of people (village) under the control of a chief, a usage not even mentioned in Churchward's comprehensive dictionary. See Lātūkefu, *Church and State*, 10, fn. 8.

[23] My first two published articles came out before my graduation: 'The opposition to the influence of the Wesleyan missionaries in Tonga', *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, 12:46 (1966) 248-64; and 'Tonga after Queen Sālote', *Journal of Pacific History*, 11 (1967), 159-62. Several others appeared before my thesis was published as *Church and State in Tonga* in 1974.

expressed in ordinary language. With a big grin on his face he said, 'That will impress the examiners more!' Maude's previous experience as a British colonial official in Pacific countries including Tonga gave him insight into the Pacific way of telling me politely that I needed to read and understand anthropological concepts and technical terminology, and I was very aware that this was a serious deficiency in my background training. In the 1950s anthropology had not yet been introduced to the University of Queensland and I had not had the opportunity to take any courses. I read particularly Raymond Firth, R.W. Williamson, R. Piddington, and E.W. Gifford, discussing the revised plan for my PhD thesis with anthropologists including Dr Ian Hogbin of Sydney University. It was around this time that Professor Davidson introduced me, indirectly, to a young anthropologist who was then lecturing at the Australian School of Pacific Administration, Mosman, and who later lectured at the University of Sydney. She was Dr Ruth Fink, and our few sessions of anthropological discussion gradually matured into a deeper friendship that ended up with our becoming engaged in 1965 and marrying in 1966. Her entry into my life helped me tremendously to understand anthropological concepts. With the exception of my first published article which appeared in 1966, every manuscript that I have written has been subjected to her critical evaluation and severe editing. I want to acknowledge here the immeasurable debt I owe my wife in my development as a Tongan and Pacific professional historian.

Another problem I had to face early was my obvious lack of objectivity, clearly revealed in my unashamedly biased attitudes in favour of the early missionaries. Like other Tongan Wesleyans, I grew up to regard the early Methodist missionaries as saints who were quite incapable of human failings. Tales of their heroic exploits and songs composed about them had been handed down from generation to generation. Everything good in Tonga was attributed to their selfless work and complete dedication. When I chose my topic I had vowed to myself that I would defend the honour of the missionaries and reveal to the ill-informed critics and irreligious academics how wrong they were about them. However, when I began to read some of the diaries and journals of early missionaries I was at first shocked to discover that my preconceived and idealised view of these men and women could not be sustained, followed by a real sense of relief that these missionaries were human after all, quite capable of doing good and equally of making mistakes. However, my deep and long-held convictions were not easy to eliminate overnight. Every so often either Dr Gunson or Professor Davidson would point out when I submitted a draft for them to read how I had gone out of my way quite unnecessarily to defend the missionaries. Towards the completion of my thesis, both Gunson and Davidson suggested to me that they thought my determination to be as objective as possible had driven me to the other

extreme by becoming over critical of the early Methodist missionaries. In spite of my attempts to remedy this, one of my examiners was convinced that I must be a devout Roman Catholic!

I feel deeply indebted to Dr Niel Gunson for his assistance in my development. He was much younger than I was, but in his gentle yet firm way, and with his high standards of scholarship and supervisory experience, he skilfully guided me. For example, he repeatedly warned me to avoid moralising and preaching, since these were out of place in historical writing. Matters of faith ought to be stated as such and should never be presented as facts. He would draw my attention to some generalisation and ask whether it could be substantiated with facts or at least circumstantial evidence. He also stressed that the temptation to include information merely because it was interesting should be resisted. Controversial issues should be presented in a balanced fashion, providing information from as wide a variety of sources as possible, and after carefully weighing the evidence I should state my own conclusion firmly provided that I was certain that my stand could be securely defended. He also cautioned against repetitiveness, plagiarism, and stressed the need to express ideas clearly and unambiguously. All these were suggestions which I seriously tried to follow and which have remained invaluable guidelines which I have tried to pass on to my students.

One of the most significant contributions made by Professor Jim Davidson to the study of Pacific history was his insistence that the history of the Pacific Islands must be written from the point of view of the Pacific Islanders. I interpreted this to mean, firstly that the point of view of the Pacific Islanders must be taken into consideration seriously, as Davidson himself had demonstrated in his book *Samoa mo Samoa*, and secondly, that Pacific history must no longer continue as a sort of footnote to the history of European imperialism. The focus must be on the history of Pacific Islanders from the earliest times and on the process of their acculturation after European contact. Since Pacific societies prior to European contact were non-literate, the unravelling of their past had to depend upon other disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, ethnohistory, botany, zoology, geography and linguistics, to name a few. Another potentially rich source of historical information lay in oral traditions, including myths, tales, proverbial sayings, place names, genealogies, titles, personal names, songs, dances and other folklore.

The importance of collecting and analysing oral traditions as part of historical research was never officially emphasised in the Pacific History Department at that time. There were no seminars or lectures on the techniques of oral research, and the matter was left to individual students' initiative and judgement. The extremely sceptical views of some anthropologists such as B. Malinowski on the historical value of oral

traditions were still very influential, and probably accounted for the lack of emphasis given to this area of research in the department. When I went to New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga for research from September 1964 to April 1965, I became increasingly convinced of the importance of using oral traditions to complement or check on written records. While I spent most of the time in New Zealand, Australia and Fiji in libraries and archives, I spent a lot of the time in Tonga collecting oral traditions. This was not always easy, for knowledgeable people tended to guard their knowledge jealously for social, economic or political reasons. Establishing good rapport with these informants to win their trust and confidence was crucial. I was spared a lot of these problems by having the support of Her Majesty, the late Queen Sālote.

Queen Sālote had shown a special interest in me since my return from the University of Queensland, probably because I happened to be the first Tongan graduate to have majored in history, and since the history of Tonga was something that lay very close to her heart. She had invited me to help interpret and translate for Dr Elizabeth Bott (Spillius) who was then working closely with Her Majesty and the Traditions Committee from 1958 to 1960 to assemble a royal archive of Tongan traditions. She had warmly accepted the Rev. Rodger Page's suggestion that I do the work in Sydney for the Traditions Committee. When Her Majesty and her party returned to Tonga from Sydney early in 1962,[24] a month after I had arrived to begin MA studies, she did something the memory of which I shall always cherish. Practically the whole Tongan community in Sydney, then much smaller, had gathered at the airport to farewell Her Majesty and her party. I was standing at the back to avoid blocking anyone's view of Her Majesty as she walked through the crowd to the plane when I became aware with great astonishment that she was moving in my direction. She extended her left hand towards me, and I automatically went down on my knees, took her hand and kissed it. To my absolute surprise, she placed something in my hands and whispered 'Buy some books with this', and left. It was a £20 note, a very large sum for an almost penniless student in a foreign land. Although the money was of immense value, what was of immeasurable importance to me at that time and ever since was her gesture of kindness and gracious interest and support for my studies.

More than two and a half years later, I arrived back in Tonga in November 1964 on the research trip, and called at the Palace immediately to pay Her Majesty a courtesy call. Her personal nurse informed me that the Queen was not feeling well and it would not be advisable to visit her. I returned home, to

[24] Queen Sālote and a small party went to Sydney in November 1961 to collect materials on Tonga from the Mitchell Library for the Traditions Committee's collection. While in Sydney, Her Majesty invited the few Tongan students who were then studying in Australia to assist her party to carry on this work.

Kolovai, but in the meantime someone must have informed Her Majesty of my visit, for that same afternoon a Police Inspector arrived in the village with a message from the Queen for me to come to the Palace the following day. On my arrival, and after the normal formal salutations, Her Majesty informed me that she would be delighted to assist me with my research in any way she could and invited me to spend some time with her in Auckland between March and April 1965, where she was to undergo medical treatment. When the news of the Queen's special invitation quickly spread, it made it much easier for me to win the close and often warm co-operation of the informants I wanted to interview throughout Tongatapu, Ha'apai and Vava'u, during the three months I spent there from November 1964 to February 1965. The month I spent with Her Majesty in Auckland was the highlight of my research trip. The valuable information she generously imparted to me from her vastly extensive knowledge of Tonga's traditional past was a tremendous help.[25]

Even on the completion of my PhD thesis, there was still no thought of my becoming a Pacific historian, in the full sense of the term. During my studies I had received a letter from the Tongan Cabinet informing me of the government's plan to establish an archives in Tonga, and that some funds had been set aside for me to train as an archivist after I had completed the PhD, and return to Tonga to establish the archives. However, this plan, like the earlier arrangement with the Traditions Committee, never eventuated. Later in July 1966, a month after my marriage, another letter came from the Tongan government, informing me that Cabinet had decided that I should return to Tonga immediately after my PhD studies were completed. I wrote two letters to the government requesting information on the plan for archival training and what they wanted me to do on my return, but none of them were answered. It was in the middle of this uncertainty that my wife and I saw advertisements for an anthropologist and a historian to lecture at the newly established University of Papua and New Guinea. We casually submitted applications for the positions, thinking that if in the meantime a reply should arrive from the Tongan government we would still return to Tonga. However, there was none, whereas the University of Papua New Guinea very promptly offered us positions.[26] It was through this appointment to the History Department in the university in Port Moresby, where my wife and I went with

[25] Lātūkefu, *Church and State*, x-xi.

[26] I was later told that the Appointments Committee of the University, of which Professor Ken Inglis, one of my former Professors at the ANU, was a member, was eager to recruit us. They wanted Ruth because of her experience as a lecturer at the Australian School of Pacific Administration, Mosman, from 1960-64, training education officers and patrol officers for service in Papua New Guinea, and they wanted me to serve as a role model, being a Pacific Islander academic, for the Papua New Guinean students.

our baby daughter in May 1967, that I became in reality a professional Pacific historian.

The Foundation Professor of the History Department was Professor Ken Inglis who had previously been with the History Department of the School of General Studies, ANU, in Canberra. Under his able leadership and that of his successor, Professor Donald Denoon, the History Department offered new courses in the history of Papua New Guinea, Pacific history (excluding Papua New Guinea), imperialism and oral history, in addition to the more conventional history courses. These innovative courses were designed to make history more relevant to the situation and needs of the students. As expected, I became responsible for the courses in Pacific history, and assisted in the teaching of some others such as oral history, and Christianity since the Reformation. I found this quite challenging and daunting - daunting because I knew virtually nothing about the history of any of the Pacific countries other than Tonga at that time. There had been no history courses dealing with the Pacific Islands at Queensland University during my time there, and what was then called Pacific history dealt with the countries on the Pacific rim. The Pacific Islands were considered too primitive to have any history worth studying and were mainly included in anthropology.

As happened with Papua New Guinea history, where teachers and students were both learning a history which had not yet formally developed, and which at the beginning lacked proper textbooks, so in Pacific history my students and I learned together - the lecturer only a few steps ahead of the students. With encouragement and support from both Ken Inglis and later Donald Denoon, I began research and later published on a variety of topics in Pacific history.

Some Thoughts on how Pacific History should be Researched and Written

In the attempt to research and write Pacific Island histories, Pacific Islands-born historians will inevitably face some formidable obstacles, which have to be overcome if our endeavours to maintain objectivity and proper balance are to be successful. It has been correctly said that to be completely unbiased is not human. Every one of us has been influenced in his or her convictions by a variety of factors that have helped to shape our unique personal experience and development. In spite of all these limitations, strong efforts must be made to minimise prejudice and racial intolerance, avoid religious bigotry and keep in the forefront the goal of seeking truth. From my experience as a Pacific historian during the past 25 years, I have identified the following obstacles, some of which, like icebergs, are much bigger and more dangerous than they appear on the surface.

Extreme nationalism is one of these, which can be very destructive and make people bitter, intolerant, irrational and hostile to others and their views.

When a course in oral history was introduced our Papua New Guinean students were very enthusiastic about it. However, some alarming reactions began to emerge from a number of the more able students. One declared that everything written by outsiders was biased against their people and their interests. Outsiders were exploiting indigenous cultures for their own benefit, to gain monetary rewards, good academic positions and promotions for themselves while the people whom they had studied gained nothing, and he advocated that outside researchers should be banned completely from research in Papua New Guinea. Another, who not only believed that all past written records were completely unreliable, but also claimed that outsider historians could never understand indigenous cultures properly, insisted that the history of Papua New Guinea should be rewritten entirely from oral traditions! These extreme views are an over-reaction to the colonial experience, and are strongest among the educated élite of former colonies in the Pacific. Colonialism has been an integral part of the Pacific Islands' histories, and Pacific historians need to consider evenhandedly both its negative and positive effects on development. Those who advocate that our cultures must be totally stripped of Western or outside influences and who idealise the traditional past are often living in a dream world. The irony is that while they engage in anti-colonial rhetoric, they still enjoy all the benefits they derive from it and would be incapable of returning to the life-style of their ancestors of a century ago.[27]

Racism has driven some prominent Pacific scholars to believe fervently that outsiders should play no part in historical research in the Pacific. It is true that outsiders may not have some of the advantages insiders have, such as a clear knowledge of local customs and understanding of the language, but they have other advantages over an insider. For example, insiders are usually so closely related to and deeply emotionally involved in their own culture that they find it difficult to remain detached and objective. Pacific historians irrespective of race, gender, creed or nationality ought to be members of a fraternity, each having something to contribute which can enrich research and writing for the benefit of everyone.

Misuse of oral traditions is another hazard. The value of oral information is no longer disputed, though it was sadly neglected by colonial and mission historians in earlier decades when older people with knowledge were still alive, who were generally ignored because it was believed that authentic history must be based on written records. As the collection of oral traditions has now become highly fashionable, it becomes imperative that the same standards of critical examination which would have been applied to written records should

[27] A more comprehensive discussion of this issue may be found in Sione Lātūkefu, 'Traditions and modernisation in the Pacific Islands', *Pacific Perspectives*, 5:2 (1976), 19-20.

be rigorously applied to oral traditions in order to avoid distortion through changes made by successive story tellers. It is extremely difficult to uncover historical facts from deeply enshrined myths and poetry, and specialised skills are therefore needed.[28] Researchers must guard against relying on a single version of a tradition and should seek as many versions as possible from a wide variety of sources to enable a critical comparison.

I recall an extreme example in a postgraduate thesis written by an overseas volunteer who was stationed in a village in one of the Pacific Islands. Its topic was concerned with some local conflicts in the distant past. He collected all his oral accounts exclusively from the same village; no attempt was made to collect stories from any other villages whose ancestors were involved in the incidents. The result was a view of the prowess and heroism of the ancestors of these villagers, which was, according to other more reliable sources, enormously inflated. Further, some of the stories included in the thesis had no relevance to his topic and the only reason for their inclusion appeared to be his desire to please his informants.

Yet another obstacle to historical research can come from ideological commitment which selects evidence or makes unsubstantiated assertions to support theoretical preconceptions. A student who wrote on the civil wars in Tonga in the 19th century concluded that they were due to class conflict. He arrived at this conclusion without prior discussion or supporting evidence in the main body of the paper. Apparently, the writer was a deeply committed Marxist who was determined to force the topic of his investigation into his framework without substantiating his interpretation.

Unquestioning loyalty can be a further impediment to historical work. Towards the end of my doctoral research in Tonga early in 1965, I was invited to give a public address on the research. In this, I offered an alternative to the widely accepted view, which was taught in schools at that time, that King George was born in Tongatapu.[29] The historical research had uncovered concrete and irrefutable evidence that King George was born in Ha'apai. Shortly after this, I received a friendly letter from a high ranking Tongan public servant who was close to the Palace, advising me to reconsider my views on the subject, for they were contrary to those held by Queen Sālote. Apparently, he, and most Tongans, particularly chiefs and government officials, regarded what I had done as an act of *fiemataru'a* (blatant impertinence) amounting to disgraceful lack of respect and loyalty to our revered sovereign. However, in spite of these criticisms I published in 1974

[28] 'Okusitino Māhina has just submitted a PhD thesis for examination to the ANU covering this issue, entitled, 'The Tongan Traditional History *Tala-e-fonua*: A vernacular Ecology-centred Historico-cultural Concept', April 1992.

[29] Lātūkefu, 'Oral traditions', 139.

what I believed to be the truth, in *Church and State in Tonga.*[30] A year later, I was given an opportunity to defend my views at a meeting with Cabinet ministers and members of parliament which was chaired by His Highness the Premier Prince Fatafehi Tu'i Pelehake,[31] in which I was asked to write a history of the Tongan Constitution for the Centenary celebrations in November 1975.[32] I explained to the meeting how none of the evidence I had collected supported the traditional belief on the subject, but that I was quite prepared to reconsider my view if the chiefs and ministers present, or anyone else for that matter, would provide firm evidence in support of the traditional belief that King George was born in Tongatapu. My loyalty to the memory of the late Queen Sālote was beyond question, but to distort the truth for the sake of loyalty would have been dishonest, and I believed Her Majesty would not have approved of such blind loyalty. The Premier called for questions or comments, but none were offered, and he then turned to me and said that he agreed wholeheartedly with everything I had said on the matter. Six years later, I heard that at the opening of the new hospital at Niu'ui, Lifuka, Ha'apai, His Majesty King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV put an end to the controversy when he gave a speech referring to this place as the birthplace of King George.[33]

Most Pacific Islanders are reluctant to make difficult decisions, even if they appear to be the right ones, for fear of giving offence. I was faced with a dilemma when Professor Jim Davidson early in 1966 asked me to write an article on 'Tonga after Queen Sālote' for publication in *The Journal of Pacific History.*[34] It posed a clear choice between remaining a patriotic Tongan who would write a glowing report that would please all Tongans, and writing an impartial analysis of the situation as I perceived it, which might provoke disapproval and resentment from Tongan leaders. I chose the latter course with the predictable consequence that for several years I remained *persona non grata* with the Tongan establishment. It was not until some nine years later, after the government had invited me to write the history of the Constitution, that the resentment and disapproval of many of the leaders began to subside.

FROM the above discussion it is clear that my becoming the first Tongan-born professional historian resulted from certain innate and environmental factors including formal education and the support and encouragement of former

[30] Lātūkefu, *Church and State*, 87.

[31] This meeting was held in the Palace Office in early February 1975.

[32] See Sione Lātūkefu, *The Tongan Constitution : A brief History to Celebrate its Centenary* (Nuku'alofa 1975).

[33] Informant Mr Maama Molitika, a prominent community and church lay leader, Koulo, Ha'apai.

[34] Lātūkefu, 'Tonga after Queen Sālote'.

missionaries and academics who were responsible for my formal training, as well as unforseen circumstances, gradually, though rather unexpectedly, leading to my eventually becoming a practising Pacific Islands historian. Through the years, both as a student, teacher and researcher of Pacific history, I have come to appreciate not only the enjoyment, excitement and challenges of the discipline, but also some of the problems which may become serious obstacles to us ethnic Pacific Islands historians, some of which derive from our cultural heritage.

The need to utilise the various traditional means of passing on history orally from generation to generation, and the forthright expressions of deeply felt nationalistic, anti-colonial sentiments, are inevitable, but they should not interfere with the critical and analytical craft of the trained historian. It has been on account of my personal insistence on the fundamental importance of this approach, which is not traditionally Pacific, that I was once blamed for writing like a European and not a Pacific Islander. Objectivity and balanced judgement are not an exclusive possession of Europeans or any other race. If we are to measure up to the exciting challenges of our profession, Pacific historians need moral courage and fortitude to expose the endemic and growing social, political and moral corruption in our societies: racism, sexism, nepotism, the exploitation of the poor and the ignorant by the rich and powerful, and the wanton destruction of our environment out of ignorance or outright greed. Only then can we live up to the ultimate goals of our profession.

THREE

All the Emperor's Philosophers: or, Going Down to the Sea in Sieves?

DERYCK SCARR

> Yet with some skill and patience he had shown
> That documents could actually be made -
> As long as they were used with proper caution -
> To reconstruct the past without distortion.
>
> Peter Lawrence, *Don Juan in Melanesia*

CONFESSION WE ARE all told is good for the soul.[1] Accordingly and as, if you will believe it, the great-grandson of a saviour of souls in the 1880s through the fringes of Thomas Hardy and Jane Austen country - the latter I should not mind finding present in my writing, in light of her elegance and the exposition of her painstaking methods by Q.D.Leavis in one of the better issues of *Scrutiny* for 1941 - I feel particularly free to redraw attention to the *Acts of the Apostles*, Chapter Two, beginning at the first verse:

> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now my confession is that the Holy Ghost in any shape or form never to my knowledge got much beyond my great-grandfather - certainly never visited me at all, although his intellectual forebear John Bunyan possibly has done in the form of Mr Valiant, if not for Truth, then at any rate for Evidence. The absolute gift of messianic tongues has been denied me, in short; and this is probably one reason why I find so much appeal in the comment of Kenneth Hudson in that essential little book *The Jargon of the Professions* published

[1] The essay retains the conversational tone it was delivered in.

by MacMillan in 1978 - where he says 'In their efforts to create a special language for themselves' certain disciplines or pseudo-disciplines 'frequently put themselves in the unenviable position of being found funny' because of, as he says elsewhere in the book, with a commentator upon Marshall Sahlins as his example, their 'determination not to sound like other men'. 'Without their jargon to sustain them, one feels, such people would wither away and die. They are, one might almost say, jargon made man.'

Is there not also, a non-pentecostal human being may even wonder, a tendency for Jargon made Humankind to set up, if not as Seminal Mind personified, then as high priest or priestess of some Super Seminal Mind? That tendency might seem like pride riding hell-for-leather to the usual fall; but who in charity would object, even though agreeing with, is it Elton, that 'seminal mind' means 'cause of a generation's being led up a blind alley'? Who would mind, however averse to pretension, if the manner were not so often overweeningly evangelical, comically smug, and gnomic, and the effect upon school-children and undergraduates sometimes either inhibiting or incapacitating - and if only such results as there have been were a little further removed from the mouse the mountain gave birth to?

Surely, to be found clutching the straws of Neo-Marxism, deconstructionism, psychohistory, 'ethnographic history', at the latest or last but one literary, philosophical, sociological golden calf, or any other would-be over-arching illuminating but, as is unhappily more likely, reductionist if not tautological or obfuscating dogma, when for good reason out of one's intellectual depth in actual deep water, may result from natural instinct, like praying - to be politely overlooked by passing swimmers or the lifeboat crew in the hope that the art of swimming will eventually be learned. But to be found clutching at a straw in 18 inches of water is to invite expressions of surprise; and to be brandishing it as a flag - and the flag of an asserted vanguard and shouting 'follow me!' - is perhaps, again, to court derision, and certainly to risk being recognised as overly dramatic.

Still, History, we are told, is Theatre; so I feel free to tell a Hollywood story. A prominent film actor once playing opposite Laurence Olivier is as the world in general knows a Method actor, taught to live, move and have his dramatic being as, say, a tree, or stone, or centipede, when a student; and more recently when playing a character who had gone without sleep for 48 hours in the film he was making with Olivier appeared it is said repeatedly on set without having slept for two nights and two days - and consequently in a zomby-like state unable to move, think or indicate possession of any kind of rational being, whether his own or the character's; until, clutching forehead, and speaking thickly and with emotion as became one gripped by unbearable professional anguish, he appealed for help, advice, comfort - possibly admiration too - to the old trouper: 'Gad, Larry - what'll ah do - how'd ya cope

with the prablem - how'd ya play the scene?' To which it is said Olivier replied, mildly enough though surely not admiringly enough: 'Why not try - acting?' We have our equivalent of Method actors, rather too often taking us on tours of nothing quite so much as their own navel. We have forsworn explorers also: boundless bottomless seas of deeper meaning are promised, shallow inlets appear. Is it not appropriate, then, to ask, after Olivier - 'Why not try writing?'

Naturally one would ask this, as one would write, with due attention to reflexivity, bearing ever in mind that the term reflexive 'describes the capacity of any system of significance to turn back upon itself, to make itself its own object by referring to itself: subject and object fuse' - though I note that the title from which I quote is *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*[2] and I might even just allow myself to wonder whether it is the mirror that's cracked. It hardly seems possible to doubt at all, except in extreme politeness, that this hyper-reflexive process typically leads to prolixity, obscurity, introversion and the pool where Narcissus drowned. A faithful reproduction is latterly, one gathers, to be found somewhere in Oceania. It is not quite unknown for the pool to be mistaken for a crystal ball.

Where Clio can be more usefully sought, looking-glasses are kept well behind the writing-table. And her servants know - don't they? - the danger of being found, like that centipede, dead in quite minor methodological ditches; or drowned while drunk on words. That can result again from what Byron said Keats was doing in, for instance, the 'Ode to a Nightingale', rather over-written with its 'A drowsy numbness . . .'. You recall I'm sure Byron's comment on as he said this 'Onanism of Poetry': 'such writing is a sort of mental masturbation - he is always f-g-g his Imagination'.[3] Is there a much more apt description of the stream flowing from would-be programme-directors of the present age - strongly imbued with the gift of tongues, not always very evidently conscious of or comfortable with historical method or results yet not re-inventors either of more effective methods or an actual useful spherical wheel; who tend to be indefatigable in preaching, furnished with a mutually admiring network extending at any rate the frontiers of academic incest, and do not invariably show signs of much actual labouring in the vineyard alongside their presumed congregation to validate their *discourse*.

Please to note if you will the italicisation here of that no doubt aboriginally perfectly innocent though always grand word, now simply pompous - yet so very much employed. *A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of*

[2] Jay Ruby (ed.), *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology* (Philadelphia 1982), 2.

[3] Leslie Marchand (ed.), *Lord Byron: Selected Letters and Journals* (London 1982), 346.

England was an appropriate enough title for John Hales's treatise in the 16th century, though I don't recall Shakespeare 'discoursing' much. Le Petit's *Discours Satiriques* of 1686 point more to the French origins of its present circulation in English (and it may be worth recalling his comment that 'Le monde est plein de fous, et qui n'en veut pas voir, Doit se tenir tout seul, et casser son miroir'). You will remember how in the 1640s, according to that adept wielder of satire Samuel Johnson, writing in 1751, Dr Francis Cheynel and his fellow presbyterian divines made episcopalian Oxford 'offended at the emptiness of their discourses, which were noisy and unmeaning'.[4] Those uplifted beings 'the glorious Houhyhnms' graciously permit Emanuel College's sometime student Dr Gulliver to hear their 'discourse' until he becomes, if not insane, then certainly Pharisaical; and those of George Borrow's gipsies who most aspire to genteel company seem to 'discourse' most freely.

To my ear the word was still being used satirically by Virginia Woolf while instructing Girton on the importance of A Room of One's Own; but nowadays at one level 'discourse' takes its place repeatedly, ritually, automatically and straight-faced - not so, again, all those who read or hear it - alongside text, and context as a verb, and space, and reflection meaning secular sermon, and epistemology, wonderfully freely used in these learned times, and the ritual use of the term 'the Other' in a sense far different from its actual meaning in colloquial English which as surely almost every schoolchild knows is 'Sex'. 'Privilege' is today a verb, meaning emphasise. We 'empower' now, rather than inform - and since we no longer believe in the concept of the fact, many of us, may not this usage have a potentially quite sinister significance? And of course 'ethnographic' has been taken over as at once a rallying-cry and a mark of the arcane and supposedly profound. So has discourse in its wider sense - meaning, one cannot necessarily say - in which it seems to stand as Logos stood to John the Apostle. 'In the beginning was the Word . . . .'

Are we not in the realm of theology, discoursing? - though very far from the Biblical scholarship, training in which has lately assisted Kambati Uriam to produce his penetrating survey of Gilbertese oral literature.[5] ' The position is that social change is isomorphic with the discourse or language that makes social change a visible event, worthy of description, publication and circulation', writes one of the most recent discourse enthusiasts, himself a psychologist. ' This takes an expanded definition of discourse or language, one that includes every sign function imaginable. Discourse is not merely a

[4] Samuel Johnson, 'Life of Dr Francis Meynel', in Donald Green (ed.), *Samuel Johnson* (Oxford 1984), 481; this volume also has Johnson's Idler and Rambler essays referred to below, as well as his *History of Rasselas.*

[5] K.L. Uriam, 'In Their Own Words: a Study of the history, nature, and function of Oral Tradition in Gilbertese Society', MA thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1992).

neutral representational device but includes everything that can be represented - all the rationalities of interactional exchange. Discourse is the institutionalized world.'[6] Or in short, and to borrow the words of the late Peter Lawrence on an earlier manifestation, discourse 'represents a state of having achieved complete esoteric knowledge akin to gnosis as against a mere groping after the relationship between facts'.[7] We are back with the 'transcendental metaphysicians' satirised so long ago as 1818 by Thomas Love Peacock in *Nightmare Abbey* - and might do well to remember that when his three men of Gotham put out to rake the moon from the sea, at least they sailed in a bowl ballasted with old wine, not a sieve.

At this uplifted level one might perhaps best apply the test 'by their fruits shall ye know them' and, leaving aside continental philosophy, the postmodern novel, literary criticism, and social theory, to which the author of the above definition of discourse passingly refers us, might turn to his summary of the events of May and September 1987 in Fiji where we learn: 'The coups were the chiefs' attempts to preserve their comprador status and capital's effort to expand the ability to generate surpluses (for example tax holidays, favorable labor laws and export processing zones)'.[8] As Theatre this is the purest Farce.

'Theoretical analysis' which is often what seems to be supposedly in question - even on offer, which is a bit rich - seems often, again, to be taking place in a lecture, or an encounter-group, at the bottom of the treacle-well after a pause at a seminar held in a seminary or around the Mad Hatter's tea-table where, you remember:

> 'Have some wine', the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.
> Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. 'I don't see any wine', she remarked.
> 'There isn't any', said the March Hare.

Most of the time, I feel like Alice - not given what I have been offered. And is there not much force, again, in the response of R.H.Tawney when he was congratulated to his evident surprise on his use of 'theory' and replied that his attitude to theory was like that of the child required to write an essay on the subject of 'Fish-hooks - their value to human society' who sat square to her paper for the hour prescribed and came up with: 'Fish-hooks have been found of value to human society wherever human beings have been careful not to swallow them'? And so, here as in the academia-derived world of Lewis

[6] Albert B.Robillard, *Social Change in the Pacific Islands* (London and New York 1991), 1.

[7] Peter Lawrence, *Don Juan in Melanesia* (Brisbane 1967), 7, n.3.

[8] Robillard, *Social Change*, 26.

Carroll, should we not all Beware the Jabberwock - high priest or priestess of the oracular and incommunicable, except supposedly to initiates, or, quite often, when decipherable, not perhaps so exceptionally profound; and shall we ever do well to forget the predicament of that Snark-hunting crew who clearly went to sea with a Proto-Deconstructionist as navigator:

> 'Other maps are such shapes, with their islands and capes!
> But we've got our brave Captain to thank'
> (So the crew would protest) 'that he's bought us the best -
> A perfect and absolute blank!'
>
> This was charming, no doubt: but they shortly found out
> That the Captain they trusted so well
> Had only one notion for crossing the ocean,
> And that was to tingle his bell.

THERE has been a lot of bell-tingling in Pacific history, from 1955 when the delivering of an inaugural lecture from a foundation chair at a central young research institute was conventionally justified no doubt, not least because the lecture was to enlighten non-historians who stood in need; and on down to the 1990s when the requirement is very little for sermons, and programme-proclaiming, shadow-boxing on thin ice and dragging up supposed roots for repeated inspection and reiterated injunction; and when there is not very much need either - is there? - for quite such repeated ego-burnishing and teaching of egg-sucking while imitating the valiant conduct of Falstaff at the battle of Shrewsbury in re-killing Hotspur; but when there might be very great advantage indeed in more application of the principles of the discipline of history - in short for practising before preaching, and even for measurably leaving the ground before aspiring to dump from great heights?

We are, in attempt at least, overburdened with pronouncements not always accompanied by major performance. Repeatedly in reviews, and purported 'surveys of the subject', there is conveyed the sense that fresh-water beetles from Narcissus' pond, perfectly splendid creatures within their sphere, are gravely proclaiming the impeccability of other water-beetles' discussion of the activities of sharks and stingrays. And however transcendental in rhetoric the effect can be pretty trumpery, a rather comic conceit running in tandem with something very like intellectual vacuity. Is anyone much uplifted by, for example, unfulfilled promises like 'empirical exercises are renewed and extended as different analyses and theoretical questions draw out sources and meanings in sources that were formerly beyond historical vision'?[9] This is

[9] Nicholas Thomas, 'Partial texts: representation, colonialism and agency in Pacific history', *Journal of Pacific History*, 25 (1990), 158.

from an anthropologist, one notes, in understanding of historiography not over-sophisticated - which is not to imply any particular disrespect for that step-child of history, anthropology, itself probably rather less than economics, sociology, geography or political science today to be included with the Peacockian, Crotchet Castle description of early 19th century political economy as characterised by 'Premises assumed without evidence, or in spite of it; and conclusions drawn from them so logically, that they must necessarily be erroneous'.

No one reading my recent attempt at a general history of the Pacific from many thousand years ago, *Kingdoms of the Reefs*,[10] or anything I published before it, from 1967's *Fragments of Empire*[11] onward, for that matter, is likely to doubt the value their author attaches to the work of anthropologists from, alphabetically, William Alkire through A.M. Hocart to Michael Young: in 1963 my confidence was reinforced by hearing a Fijian, not himself a notable reader, thank his gods his most prominent, much unloved cross-cousin was not a woman, inescapably his wife. Hocart still gets closer than most to some Fijian mores, in his *Lau Islands* and his *Northern States of Fiji*. A good new exposition of social perception in a chiefly village is Christina Toren's *Making Sense of Hierarchy*.[12] At the same time, it is a very great pity that Peter France's *The Charter of the Land* has been so vulgarised by, quite often, the sociologically-inclined who are then rather blundered after by people, commonly from political 'science', seeking grist to improbable politicised mills; the chapter on the establishment of a Fijian social and political orthodoxy is itself based more on the inspiration of a disillusioned colonial civil servant, Peter France's then alter ego, than on detailed historical evidence.[13] But Raymond Firth's *History and Traditions of Tikopia* runs admirably well now with the recent study of Tikopia's archaeology and ecology by Patrick Kirch and Douglas Yen -and *Kingdoms of the Reefs* profits. Roger Keesing's *Kwaio Religion* is valuable to an historian, as of course is Jan Vansina's *Children of*

[10] Deryck Scarr, *Kingdoms of the Reefs: the History of the Pacific Islands* (Melbourne 1990).

[11] Deryck Scarr, *Fragments of Empire: a history of the Western Pacific High Commission 1877-1914* (Canberra 1967).

[12] A. M. Hocart, *The Lau Islands (Fiji) and their Fairy-tales and Folklore* (London 1918), *The Northern States of Fiji* (London 1952); Christina Toren, *Making Sense of Hierarchy: cognition as social process in Fiji* (London 1990).

[13] For an examination of the part of *The Charter of the Land* (London 1969) that most misleads the unwary, see Ian Heath, 'Towards a Reassessment of Gordon in Fiji', *Journal of Pacific History*, 9 (1974), 81-92; and for the actual origins of British policy in Fiji, Deryck Scarr, *Viceroy of the Pacific: a Life of Sir John Bates Thurston*, Vol. 2 (Canberra 1980). *Charter of the Land* is notwithstanding a book to read, and greatly to enjoy.

Woot - not least, for its frank though belated admissions about the mutability of oral history.[14]

Still, more generally, and today quite as much as in 1974 when G.S.Kirk first published his *Nature of Greek Myths*, with its gentle exposés of anthropological flights toward the sun on wings attached with wax, it is difficult not to echo him in being 'tempted to implore the anthropologist to desist from theorizing and to do a little more observing';[15] and I think fondly not only of Peter Lawrence's *Road Belong Cargo*, with its dialogue between current memory and contemporary record, but also of his *Don Juan in Melanesia*, the satirical narrative poem about burning the historical record for the sake of an apparently entrenched but, as it turns out, evanescent theoretical position. More anthropologists may now have discovered history, even be inventing it, but they are not so numerous who seem to have read much history or know how to recognise what in historiography is new and true; an inbred though chrysaloid 'historical anthropology' sub-group gravely re-erects, as novel, large straw targets, like colonialism, and sets about them with emotion sometimes apparently warmed up from the Boston Tea-Party. As to rather a lot of current sociology and political science bearing on the Pacific, of course, it would probably be better, where it claims to reproduce even recent historical evidence, to wonder more or less in silence, if there were the least doubt, not why it is so strangely done, from Christchurch in New Zealand to Armidale in New South Wales, but on what foundation it is attempted at all. For their part, geographers from Canberra to Cambridge, a markedly prescriptive group for others' benefit even while still groping for a discipline themselves, are now sometimes showing a quaint surprise that, for instance, independent farmers still maintain close links with their villages, even on distant islands. Occasionally they go so far as to recommend sustained resort to the historical record.

Political correctness in defiance of evidence is no fiction of the imagination in Australian academia. Along with a distinguished Polynesian present, no doubt I shall one day recover from hearing two predictably deposed members of the Bavadra government introduced to an academic audience by a senior member of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University with the comment that 'one would have hoped' Fijians would have been 'mature' enough to accept the 'democratic' decision that had made Dr Bavadra Prime Minister by Indian more than Fijian votes. In fact the social

[14] R. W. Firth, *History and Traditions of Tikopia* (Wellington 1961); Patrick Kirch and D.E. Yen, *Tikopia: the prehistory and ecology of a Polynesian outlier* (Honolulu 1982); Roger M. Keesing, *Kwaio Religion: the living and the dead in a Solomon Island society* (New York 1982); Jan Vansina, *The Children of Woot: a history of the Kuba peoples* (Madison 1978).

[15] G.S.Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (London 1988), 60.

sciences sometimes seem peopled by members of the Flat Earth Society at a loss to understand how travellers, who set out despite warnings they would surely fall off, have suddenly reappeared smiling from the opposite direction; and everything but the explanation that the world is round can be advanced by indignant would-be guides, while any observers who predicted the travellers' safe return are likely to be represented as being interested friends of ship-owners and shoe-makers.

NOT bell-tingling, then, but careful navigation by chart and compass, chronometer, sextant and star, is the recommended process for crossing oceans; and I am not sure this procedure, taking successive fixes and constantly re-checking one's position, is very different in the business of navigating through the identifiable remains of the past in order to describe what can be descried of the past, that we call history; while I am pretty sure that the impulse to do so is - speaking for the one person I can I think be moderately sure of, though borrowing someone else's words - sparked by 'a desire to reduce a chaos of experience to some sort of order, and a hungry curiosity'.

That is of course the voice of a novelist, from Graham Greene's autobiography;[16] and the difference of course again is that where his experiences are usually reported first hand from his travels in Greeneland, in other words his imagination playing upon Brighton, Vietnam or Mexico, the historian's travels, confrontations, most of her or his truly professional experiences, are indirect, usually at best second hand. And then - 'I have passed my life in reading the accounts that travellers give', says Jean Chardin who passed it from 1643 to 1713, 'and I have not met with two that have given me the same idea of the same people'. Just so - there was more than one Baron Munchhausen. And how much more, then, we are supposed to suppose, must one historian's reports of travels in the mind through the record of, as it may be, revolutionary France, the Wars of the Roses, the 19th century Western Pacific or late 20th century Fiji, be capable of being different, fundamentally and validly different, from another's? and not merely capable of being so, but almost inevitably bound to be so? This is because as we are told - in a line of thought that if consistently applied must make everyday life uncommon whimsical and sometimes agitated to the point of serious personal discomfort - 'interpretation' is the thing, and inevitably subjective.

Ships have been known to go aground, with bad navigators - for 'navigation', to quote this time myself, 'needs practice, and concentration,

[16] Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life* (London 1971), 9.

experience and even a little applied intelligence'.[17] And is it too much to suppose that the historian's craft requires all these qualities? and that when they are not lacking, the role of the observer about which we hear so much is in fact infinitely subordinate? that is, when the observer is concerned to apply the normal rules of intellectual honesty required, outside parliaments, of the world at large, eschewing party, and careerism, cronyism, and even a healthy apprehension?

Certainly it might for instance be quite difficult, and properly so, intellectually, to find very great, very fundamental soundly-based differences of substance in the post-1967 writing on the essential nature of the labour trade in the Western Pacific[18] - except perhaps the importation of the curious concept 'cultural kidnapping' which may even be related to current North Queeensland politics where kidnapping of some sort is essential to current claims for monetary compensation for Islanders' descendants. The rest has been the addition of valuable detail and dimensions - setting aside a tendency in Queensland to criticise the tailors of unregenerate non-Queenslanders even while borrowing their clothes.

On the other hand, to illustrate avoidable perils, it would not be difficult at all to demonstrate that most soi-disant academic writing about events in Fiji from April-May 1987 onward has been based on dogged politicised misunderstanding if not misrepresentation by actual though undeclared participants, applying what the 1987 election itself revealed was their fundamental misunderstanding of the world immediately around them, and responsible in the Fiji Labour Party for the belief that mere rhetoric could overnight change electors' deep-seated reality. This political party had a view of the past promulgated by sociologists and political scientists at the University of the South Pacific with little research or sense of history, but overriding political prejudices. Their view of political processes in the country was akin to a belief that driftwood drives surf ashore. The collapse and current resuscitation of the party as an Indian cane-farmers' party shows some Fijian former members publicly admitting that the coalition with the

[17] Deryck Scarr, 'Where have all the Navigators Gone? or, Through the Looking Glass Again', *Journal of Pacific History*, 23 (1990), 238.

[18] The immodest reference is to Scarr, *Fragments of Empire*, 138-60, 176-251, and 'Recruits and recruiters: a Portrait of the Pacific Islands labour trade', *Journal of Pacific History*, 2 (1967), 5-24 - reprinted in extended form in J.W.Davidson and Deryck Scarr (eds), *Pacific Islands Portraits* (Canberra 1970); followed by Introduction and Notes to W.E.Giles, *A Cruize in a Queensland Labour Vessel to the South Seas* (Canberra 1968); naturally readers will also and particularly recall *Passage, Port and Plantation: a history of Solomon Islands Labour Migration 1870-1914* (Melbourne 1973) by Peter Corris who is sorely missed in the profession.

Indian-dominated National Federation Party was likely to produce a Fijian backlash.[19]

The case is instructive, again, because rarely in our region have politics and academia been so visibly entwined. To understand the collapse of Fiji's independence constitution, go simply to the writing of Coalition Government protagonists, based as they are on applying either simplistic democratic or vulgar Neo-Marxist models to a country where the indigenous half of the population was accustomed to keeping its own counsel among strangers and rarely argued when confidently told how the modern world was inexorably carrying them along - 'white people talk with such authority!', as a Fijian woman of my acquaintance puts it, not admiringly. Since the coup of May 1987 there has been a flying to politically convenient fictions, and sticking there while alleging smoke in order to fan up a screen. There continue to be projections of personal social and political values along with inability to believe one's subjects may actually, legitimately, live more complicated inner lives than one's own; and, very remarkably, among outsiders a hatred of supposedly omnipresent, omnipotent 'chiefs' which among other things overlooks the fact that strictly speaking there were more chiefs in the Fiji Labour Party than in the Alliance. In parallel runs belief in the wickedness and alleged influence of an 'eastern chiefly establishment', dogma not troubled by the perfectly public initiatory political role of western Viti Levu in the coups and reaching one of its most enraptured heights in the representation of the Young Fijian Association with its anti-Indian commoner clerks and schoolteachers of the 1920s and 30s as composed of 'younger members of the eastern chiefly elite'. This gem is from a North American Neo-Marxist sociologist with a powerful sense of personal mission before the coup and after his precipitate departure from Fiji in mid-1987.[20] Prospero rejected projects a powerful sense of resentment - sometimes along with innocence unabashed and with what, if sociologists, political scientists and historians when on duty were as concerned to subvert their sense of self as the world supposes, would be an astonishing number explaining why a minority government with minimal electoral support from the indigenous community was overthrown by indigenes, by projecting the perception of victims not agents.[21]

Denial, the unwillingness to face disagreeable reality, like death, or the inapplicability to the South Pacific as to eastern Europe of cherished social and political dogma, or the fact that one's own ethnic group is seen as

[19] See Ratu Simione Durutalo's letters, *Fiji Times*, 5 and 17 Feb. 1992, for instance.

[20] Michael C. Howard, *Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State* (Vancouver 1991), 46.

[21] See Deryck Scarr, *Fiji: the Politics of Illusion: the Military Coups in Fiji* (Sydney 1988) for the causes and course of a coup the author had predicted.

immigrant and except in certain enclaves like Levuka tends to be characterised as preaching equality while practising discrimination, is a well-known phenomenon. It is probably best avoided by any historian who would on the whole prefer not to keep intellectual company with the ghost of the Idler's Jacobite friend of 1758 who believed King William had burned down Whitehall to steal the furniture and who knew who had poisoned Queen Anne.

Frankly speaking, and *pace* E.H.Carr, again, is it not the bad historian who gets only the facts he or she wants? and while past action can only be described if it has left traces of itself - even if only in the memory of actors or witnesses - did it not once exist independently of any later inquirer? The inquirer, the genuine historian, is not first and foremost an interpreter, still less an advocate, but something perhaps after the fashion of an examining magistrate, a coroner, though quite without judicial purpose or powers. And the historian - if you will forgive the soap-box - is infinitely subordinate, determinedly open-minded and sceptical about what is found, asking questions that derive not exclusively from within but from the circumstances; seeking hypotheses, then setting up rival hypotheses in order to test and if possible destroy them by more questioning; testing again and refining whatever may remain if anything does; and remembering always with E.P.Thompson - who, as in my recent *Politics of Illusion: the Military Coups in Fiji*, will easily stand quoting again, non-enslaved Marxist as Thompson is, though given to discoursing - that 'proof consists in a dialogue between concept and evidence, a dialogue conducted by successive hypotheses, on the one hand, and empirical research on the other'.[22]

In fact, if I could stay on this soap-box a fraction longer - it doesn't come naturally or comfortably, I hope I need not repeat - I might risk being a touch didactic, even more than semi-serious, and suggest that the historian

> (if he is worth considering at all) . . . becomes the servant of his evidence of which he will, or should, ask no specific questions until he has absorbed what it says. At least, his questions remain general, varied, flexible: he opens his mind to the evidence both passively (listening) and actively (asking). The mind will indeed soon react with questions but these are the questions suggested by the evidence, and though different men may find different questions arising from the same evidence the differences are only to a very limited extent dictated by themselves. The part they themselves will play in these differences lies in different responses to the suggestions put out by the evidence. After this initial stage, the questions arising

[22] E.P.Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London 1978), 39; on the application to Fiji, see Deryck Scarr, *Fiji: The Politics of Illusion; the Military Coups in Fiji* (Sydney 1988), especially Chapter Eight.

In an age of exhortation to follow interdisciplinary pursuits - which rational historians practise anyway - it is also worth recalling Thompson's comments on how wilfully little other disciplines understand what historians actually do.

> will be pursued specifically, and at this point the master-servant relationship is reversed. Now the historian specifically seeks evidence to answer his questions, and if his selection is ill-considered or too narrow he may introduce distortion. The interaction of the material and the questions asked of it is very intricate and sophisticated, but it is not true that in the proper pursuit of his study the historian's need to select destroys the independent existence of history. If that happens we are confronted by a bad historian writing bad history . . ..[23]

There is a well-known, clearly-identifiable and I suppose even rather enviable confidence about Sir Geoffrey Elton, pretty much justified in his case according to personal recollection of his actual practice, of his historical writings' impact on undergraduates in the late 1950s. These dicta do come from one who writes rather than agonises, practised very substantially indeed before he preached, and who having learned English the hard way as a second language does not seem to feel the need to seek the appearance of profundity by maltreating it. His description of the process coincides with my own at any rate attempted practice since the time when - as a Proto Postmodernist in the making, possibly even mildly Deconstructed, I sometimes gather; certainly owing nothing to Positivism since I am not much acquainted with general laws; as entirely unconvinced as I am now that 'Pacific history' was or could usefully claim to be a discrete discipline; and fundamentally less influenced by what I learned as a graduate student in a research department which at that time was generally rather slow to publish substantially, than by what as a British undergraduate I had brought with me from, say, F.W. Maitland in *Domesday Book and Beyond* and J.E.A. Jolliffe in *Angevin Kingship*, analytical works by authors grappling as imaginatively as clear-headedly with very large bodies of original material - I began trying in 1961 to find out what happened, how, and why, in the Western Pacific, then in Fiji, then in the Pacific at large; and since I was first confronted by the tyranny of the blank sheet of writing paper on which all this past experience is to be reproduced. It may be for a wider, sometimes it even appears more imaginative, certainly more literate world than that academia where, as in the Barrister's dream aboard the Snark-hunting ship, it often seems that

> The Jury had each formed a different view
> (Long before the indictment was read),
> And they all spoke at once, so that none of them knew
> One word that the other had said.

THE dimensions of that sheet of paper are constricting, we all know. However well the words are deployed on it, and however carefully chosen, they will not

[23] G.R.Elton, *The Practice of History* (London 1979), 83-4.

convey all that is in our minds, still less in our notes, nor be as well understood as we understand them ourselves, and rarely as carefully read as we wrote them. If perfection in communication is in question, go not to words but to music, or nature, or at any rate to a very great poet. I do not see why we should not assume an intelligent literate attentive readership, even so, and am still surprised when writing down is implicitly recommended.

But above all, surely, stands the consideration that very little worth having is gained by larding the page with jargon, as distinct from essential technical language - not least, because jargon is often evasion; and that much might be gained by attempting a little more conscious humour. The most jargon-ridden seem the most humourless - as well as the least at ease with their craft. The doing not the talking about doing, or falsely claiming to have done, or calling for others to do, is the test. Writing analytical historical narrative, to take one example, has many of the charms that keep novelists at their desks, and the difficulties that drive them away. The historian actually writing history can at any rate take some professional comfort from Dr Johnson who, though he thought imaginative literature the higher because more difficult art, nonetheless had the tutor of Rasselas tell him: 'If we act only for ourselves, to neglect the study of history is not prudent: if we are entrusted with the care of others, it is not just'. The Palauan proverb may come to mind too: 'Past determines Present and Future'. It was not quite forgotten during the writing of *Kingdoms of the Reefs* which as the most recent thing I have done I suppose particularly brought me here; nor, when its predecessors, *Politics of Illusion* especially, were in hand, did the thought fail to occur that the past distorted can be a social and political weapon very dangerous to the present, often turning in the hand of those trying to wield it - as the politics of illusion in Fiji's 1987 election campaign and the subsequent assumption of untenable power very predictably went to show.

In order in some sense to nod in Bunyan's direction too, then, and like Johnson's Rambler, I was 'following the direction of my own reason' while not failing to recall that when Collingwood announced in *The Idea of History* that history is essentially the history of thought, he meant primarily his subjects' thoughts not his own. It is after all a rare historian who is half as interesting as the people he or she is supposed to be writing about; in the annals and archives of Pacific Island states you will find one of the rare breed, from Samoa through the Cook Islands to the Trust Territory of Micronesia and I imagine on to Papua New Guinea - but that was J.W.Davidson. Maybe, again, when so much talk will no doubt remain in cosmic code, it is worth remembering Diodorus Siculus - who, in the rhyme, made himself ridiculous, mistaking thimbles, for phallic symbols.

FOUR

Constructing General Histories

I. C. CAMPBELL

WITH THE DIVERSIFICATION of historians' interests in the second half of the 20th century, much less consideration is given to 'general' history. An older generation regarded it as the highest form of historical literature, which a mature scholar might aspire to write as the ultimate statement of his or her art. General history had an intellectual majesty, expressing the universally acknowledged truth that society was complex and indivisible, while specialisation was intellectually limiting as well as misleading in its exclusion of the larger context.

When I first became professionally involved with Pacific history as a PhD student in 1972, this status of general history still prevailed, although increasingly under assault. It was still only a few years since Professor Postan had denounced general history in an uncompromising advocacy of detailed, specialised, archives-based research.[1] But already the emphasis had shifted in historical publications towards books which were rarely anything other than edited PhD theses. Similarly, undergraduate history courses were beginning to become more specialised, displacing the traditional survey courses and bringing undergraduates into closer contact with the work that 'real' historians do.

Much as I enjoyed the richness and detail and the apparently greater fidelity to truth that the new, specialised historiography gave, I was convinced that the proper subject of the historian was 'whole' subjects, not fragments, and whether as a publishing historian or a teacher, the ultimate objective was to reconnect all these fragments into a superior synoptic history which would replace the older general histories with their defects of omission and oversimplification. Consistent with this frame of mind, one of the things that

[1] M.M. Postan, 'Fact and relevance in historical study', *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, 51 (1968), 411-25.

appealed to me strongly about my thesis topic on beachcombers in Polynesia was that it embraced the whole of that culture area, not just a single island or island group, and took me into the primary sources of culture contact on a very broad thematic front so that I was able to learn the subject generally as well as investigate an aspect of it in detail.

After completing my thesis I optimistically waited for some senior scholar, tenured, cleverer, better qualified, more widely read and more eloquent than I, to produce the long awaited general history of the Pacific Islands. There were a number of such proposals in the mid-70s, but I waited in vain.

Over the next decade of alternating unemployment, junior academic employment and non-academic employment I came to some important realisations: most academics moved among and communicated mainly with their own kind; most of them had no conception of the deep ignorance of the general public and little enough understanding of the hazy and fragmented intellectual maps of their own students; most of them - witness their dust-jacket 'blurbs' about their books being written for both the specialist and the 'general reader' - seemed to think that there was a non-academic public that read esoteric treatises for fun; and most academics were contemptuous of any alleged need to provide feed-back to the wider community and polity, and were scornful of attempts to do so. Moreover, I discovered that school teachers do not have time to read books or even find out what books are being written; consequently, there is a lag of up to about 30 years between academic publication and its influencing the school population; and finally, despite all difficulties and discouragement, there are some people who just like to know, but who like their knowing to fit in with a wider understanding of the world.

The conclusion that I drew from all this was that there needed to be a book telling people what Pacific history was all about by someone who knew something about both the subject and the audience. Those who might have done it still had not. So inferring that they never would, and returning to academia in 1987 with orders to teach a first-year survey course on the Pacific, I accepted the idea that I would have to write the necessary book myself. Such was my isolation from academic life at the time that I was unaware that Deryck Scarr was about to do the same thing. Had I known that, I probably would not have attempted it myself.

In Pacific history there had been early attempts at 'general' histories, but not by specialist Pacific historians. One writer, W.P. Morrell, may be said to have contributed substantially to the creation of a specialised Pacific historiography with his book *Britain in the Pacific Islands*,[2] which is more comprehensive than the title implies. Morrell's book, indeed, is a paradigm of

[2] Oxford 1960.

the general history. It is what might be called an attempt at 'total' history, though not in the sense that it treats every imaginable subject for investigation about the past. What is 'total' about Morrell's history is that it tries to give 'complete' explanations: minor themes are introduced as they bear on the exposition of his major themes, and he was not content to merely allude to such minor themes, but researched them carefully and discussed them in sufficient detail to make each intelligible on its own terms, so that the extended historical explanation arose from the interplay of multiple themes.

Morrell planned and wrote on a scale rarely attempted these days. He tackled a broad subject almost entirely from primary sources for a book which would be the 'full story', not a summary of its subject. It was the work of 20 years. In much the same way, R.S. Kuykendall wrote a general but 'complete' history of the Hawaiian kingdom, a work capable of telling the 'whole' story, and also becoming a reference text for other historians.[3] This work was the single-minded pursuit of its author for half his lifetime.

Most other general histories on Pacific subjects are not of this genre; the term 'short history' is probably more apt, and would apply to such works as Deryck Scarr's history of Fiji[4] and Griffin, Nelson and Firth's history of Papua New Guinea[5]. Others fall somewhere in between, such as Colin Newbury's history of French Polynesia[6] and Francis Hezel's history of the Marshall and Caroline Islands[7].

Most Pacific historians confine themselves to intensely thematic quests while lamenting from time to time the lack of something more synoptic. This seems to imply a recognition of the legitimacy of general history (either short or extended), and also some esteem for it. On the other hand, the reluctance of most historians to attempt it, and especially to attempt one for the whole Pacific, seems to imply that they consider such a task is not really worth their attention. Reviewers of my attempt have suggested reasons: 'a notoriously difficult genre', one called it; another declared that anyone undertaking such a task was both brave and foolhardy. Whether these were personal excuses or general observations is conjectural. But the idea that the art of short, general history of a large subject is impossibly difficult, or alternatively, that it is simply a matter of summarising (or popularising or simplifying) other people's work, implies that it is not a proper employment for an historian, and that the

[3] R.S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, 3 vols. (Honolulu 1937, 1953 & 1967).

[4] Deryck Scarr, *Fiji. A Short History* (Sydney 1984).

[5] James Griffin, Hank Nelson and Stewart Firth, *Papua New Guinea. A Political History*, (Richmond, Vic., 1979).

[6] Colin Newbury, *Tahiti Nui. Change and Survival in French Polynesia 1767-1945* (Honolulu 1980).

[7] Francis X. Hezel, *The First Taint of Civilization. A History of the Caroline and Marshall Islands in Pre-Colonial Days, 1521-1885* (Honolulu 1983).

profession can get along well enough without such books. Such ideas perform a disservice.

The following discussion is not an analysis of general histories, nor even an argument, but rather a position paper written from the perspective of the author of a short history.

A short, general history is probably defined more commonly in negative terms than in positive ones: that is, by what it is not, rather than by what it is. Other histories have their definitions - political, religious, economic, biographical, and so on - so that 'general' history might seem the residue left by the prior claims of specialised histories or a hotch-potch of all these specific and definable types of history. It is sometimes called a summary of specialised histories, or worse still, that kiss of death for scholarly reputations, a 'text-book'.

General history should claim its own status as a specialised genre, just as in medicine 'general practice' (the activity of a physician who has not specialised) is now recognised as a speciality in its own right, requiring its own postgraduate training, its own canons of conduct, its own conventions, and its own definite role. General history - especially the short variety - is a distinct variety of historiography. It has its unique role and function, it demands its own intellectual discipline and it has a form which distinguishes it from other kinds of historical writing. Despite its appearance of being composed of a mixture of everything else that historians do, it has unity.

The relationship between specialist history and general history is rather like Marx's historicist formula with its perennial tension between thesis and antithesis producing synthesis which invokes its own antithesis and a new synthesis in a continuing spiral of change. Even professional historians need general histories. None of us can read every thesis, article or even book, and without intermediate works of synthesis or synopsis it is difficult to see how any of us can keep up with new information and new ideas. But more to the point, dialogue between generalist and specialist is probably the most productive way of making progress in historiography by way once again of the thesis-antithesis-synthesis formula.

The short history is more akin to an essay than a treatise. It takes information which is well known or readily available to the profession, and digests it, leading to re-arrangement of the data and the creation of a new artefact. Consequently its emphasis is more on synthesis than analysis, whereas other kinds of history are perhaps more analytical than synthetic. It is the role of general history to integrate historians' knowledge of the past, and to integrate the known facets of the past into an image which corresponds to the complex interrelatedness of a human society. If the analytical historian be thought of as a spinner, the general historian is a weaver, making patterns of other workers' threads.

The general historian, however, is subject to the limitations of the two-dimensional loom which is the literary form. He has less freedom in some ways than the thesis writer or other specialised analyser who in narrowing the path of his inquiry can be as idiosyncratic and imaginative and perverse as his respect for evidence and reality will allow. The general historian works under the jealous scrutiny of every specialist whose thread he appropriates, and has to anticipate the demands of a public whose backgrounds, interests, tastes and requirements cover an infinite spectrum. For this reason, the general historian is not necessarily a simplifier; on the contrary, it is 'simpler' to take a single theme or single genre and discuss that to the exclusion of all else. The general historian must always be attentive to the interplay and overlap of themes, and strive to maintain their separate intelligibility while simultaneously explicating their mutual relationship. There may also be themes which simply co-exist, and which have to be discussed although there is no relationship between them. Co-existing but unrelated themes present difficulties in creating unity and coherence in the discussion.

The twin problem of unity and coherence is perhaps central to the methodology of general history, and it is this which most distinguishes the general history from a text-book. At any convenient point, the text-book writer can terminate a discussion and change the subject since his purpose is to set forth information according to extrinsic criteria of the kind 'Such and such a target audience ought to know these things: a . . ., b . . ., c . . .'. But if history as written is to have any prospect of corresponding to an objective reality, then it must have intrinsic integrity: the scope of the discussion should not seem to be arbitrary because if it did, the astute historian-reader would say 'This is not complete; the explanation is left hanging; certain significant influences have been neglected and therefore the explanation does not explain what it purports to explain'. And yet this attempt at roundedness or completeness cuts across the objective of unity and coherence.

The historian who tries sincerely to explain anything finds in fact that everything seems to be related to everything else. Suppose he wants to explain the conversion of a people to a different religion: he must describe and assess the role of the evangelists (what did they believe? why did they act? where did their ideas and motivation come from? how far into the social intellectual and psychological background must one penetrate to understand these things?); he must understand the converts; he must understand the milieu of the conversion; he must discern and demonstrate the relationship between a single personal decision and a multiplicity of such decisions, and then try to distinguish between multiple personal decisions and a collective decision. He will also find that when he tries to establish the 'facts' of the case there may be a difference between people's acknowledged motives and their actual ones. He will find that religious affiliation has something to do with wealth and

poverty, power and suffering, health and mortality, social status, age and sex. One might well ask, how can anything be explained without having to write the entire history of a community?

This is the question which constantly confronts the general historian. The specialist historian might say in a similar situation, 'I'm only concerned with the influence of X on Y', but the generalist must ask 'Which of A to Z am I to neglect in tracing the influences upon Y, and which of A1 to Z1 am I to consider in discussing the effects of Y?' Selection, in other words, has to be employed to achieve coherence, but it does so by sacrificing completeness; unity of theme has to be found somewhere between a single theme, and the wholeness of all experience.

The simple formula which purports to solve the problem of selection is the test of significance: include the significant, omit the insignificant. Significant things are those which influence later events, or which help us to understand the nature of a process. This test is illusory. The net of significance will capture or release facts of different dimensions according to the size of the meshes. Does the general fisherman cast a finely meshed net or an open one?

Most historians do not have the philosophical inclination to probe such questions in an abstract manner. Their tests of an explanation are essentially pragmatic: does the explanation account for all the known evidence, and does it do so in a consistent manner? Can one imagine an alternative explanation for which evidence might be sought or reconstructed? Is the explanation coherent, that is, does it conform to our notions of plausibility and experience of how the world works? This last test - the 'coherence theory of truth' - might seem thoroughly subjective, and it is here that the general historian is perhaps at his most vulnerable, and also his most powerful. His selections of what to include and exclude, both in topics and modes of explanation, will be the foundation of his interpretation. On the basis of these decisions, other historians will call his work objective or partisan, Marxist or idealist, competent or incompetent.

Ideally, such selection should not be arbitrary, but should support the twin goals of unity and coherence. If the author knows broadly what he wants to say and has a clear practical objective as to length and audience, then these philosophical difficulties are of little consequence. Practical difficulties do remain, but most of these are dealt with by a few rule-of-thumb principles.

First, there seems to be no reason for writing general history unless to bring the subject to the notice of readers outside the limited professional circle. Despite the argument that specialists need generalists, most general history, and short histories in particular, are not addressed to the specialists. General history, especially the short variety, implies a general reader, a non-specialist audience. This immediately imposes certain constraints of which the first is length. Keith Sinclair described 'short history' as between 70,000 and

120,000 words.[8] I presume that he meant this in a purely descriptive sense but it is a good guide. If a book is longer than that it changes its character from an extended essay to a reference book. I think that up to about 100,000 words there is a fair chance that an alert reader will still remember what the first chapter was about while reading the last. This is an important consideration if as an historian one is concerned about the structure of events or with an extended interpretation. The writer wants the reader to be able to think about the whole subject. Economy of treatment facilitates that.

Length places a constraint on content, and an early distinction must be made between essential facts and discretionary facts. There are certain basic facts which differentiate history from other social sciences, and these concern the sequence of events which have shaped the structure of society, and have given rise to other events. One could not write a history of Europe without making the ancient-medieval-modern distinction, or without referring to Charlemagne, Innocent III and Hitler, and one cannot write the history of any Pacific island without extensive discussion of European contact, and in particular the roles of traders, missionaries and imperial officials. These are our data and we cannot wander too far from them and still claim to be writing general history.

Providing basic information is the first concession which must be made to the general reader, and it would probably be possible to achieve a rough consensus among historians as to what this might be. How far beyond basic facts the writer goes into the area of discretionary information is an individual matter, guided by his sense of causation, his sense of style, his perception of his intended audience, and the number of words at his disposal. The nature of the subject limits the range of possibilities and the possibilities for individual variation are greater with details of smaller significance.

The second rule of thumb follows from the first: it is to be conventional - or at least avoid extremes of eccentricity. Conventional means 'what most practitioners do', and given a defined subject, span of years, and word limit, the products of different historians are going to bear some resemblance to each other. The 'unconventional' history will run the risk of not being history as the historical profession sees it, and thus will fail to represent a consensual understanding of the subject. A radically original interpretative essay has a different function from general history. It might reshape the subject; it might have merit, but the writer might have no audience, like the street-corner orators one sometimes sees, heard but ignored by countless passers-by. There is not much merit, and there is less satisfaction, in being 'ahead of one's time'.

[8] Keith Sinclair, 'On Writing Shist', *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, 51 (1968), 426-32.

Third, and partly because of the constraints mentioned, general histories are apt to be, as well as conventional, conservative in their interpretations. The general historian will be cautious about advancing his own conclusions about particular points unless he has some assurance that those interpretations have already been generally accepted by the profession. At the same time, he will be slow to adopt the latest arguments of others in matters in which he lacks specialised research experience. His specialist critics will condemn as outdated and derivative his explanations which reflect such caution, but the general historian has a responsibility to his readership to reflect the consensus of the profession as he understands it. Where he does advance an independent opinion, he will rarely be able to justify it or fully develop it, and reviewers will seize on such remarks as errors. If he tries to avoid that trap by providing a full exposition, his history is likely to become unbalanced, or turn into a series of research essays, with the loss of the unity and integration referred to earlier. Conservatism is therefore the safest option, even though the result might appear slightly dated and reviewers might condemn the writer's 'lack of originality'. This sometimes raises serious problems for the author who struggles between being a self-appointed spokesman for the profession and a self-appointed critic or conscience of the profession. The only rule that I can suggest is to think carefully as you hover between the two roles.

Similarly, simplicity is preferable to subtlety and sophistication, both in modes of explanation and in literary technique. The general reader wants enlightenment, not confusion; he is not interested in gaining a blinding impression of the author's cleverness. Indeed, he is not interested in the author at all, and the author should not intrude in any conspicuous way. If a book does not make its subject accessible, it will not be read; and if a book will not be read there is not much point in writing it. Interpretations must seem reasonable - not so simple or monocausal as to invoke contempt, but not so complicated as to obscure the point. In other words, general history is ultimately governed by pragmatic rules of which the most pressing is reader interest. In a thesis or specialised work a writer might say to the reader, in effect, 'This is difficult; I'm trying to be faithful to the truth, and you must keep up with me'. The generalist author, however, must keep back with the reader. The aspiring author should therefore employ a style in which no sentence needs to be read more than once, in which the chain of cause and effect can be immediately traced, and in which the essential significance of a process can be immediately comprehended. The greater the number of themes that have to be brought together, the more frequent should be the chapter divisions. Each chapter should be short enough to be read and understood at a single sitting; if that compresses a topic too much, then make it into two chapters.

Most general histories take a narrative form. A synchronic analysis of a particular society at a particular time might be 'historical' in the sense that it is about the past, but the analysis and exposition might be that of a sociologist or economist. Historians would consider such a study useful, and perhaps even worth undertaking themselves, but most would hesitate to call it a 'general history'. 'History' implies the study of change through time; another study located in the past might be 'historical' (that is, 'like history') but not 'history' *per se*.

Nevertheless, many historians are uncomfortable with the idea of narrative in the belief that it causes oversimplification. In this view, narrative interferes with the important work of analysis, and therefore cannot explain. A narrative, it is said, cannot stop to explain. Whether it can or not is surely up to the historian who can digress as much as he likes, the only real constraint being whether within the parameters of length and style set for the work, he has the room to move. Other historians would argue that narrative is integral to historical explanation, and that no realistic analysis is possible without showing the sequence of events, and the fact that there is a particular chronological arrangement *is* the reason why certain processes develop. To know what happened, runs an extreme form of this argument, is to know why it happened. Narrative thus contains its own explanations.

Most histories, in fact, are neither exclusively and simply narrative, nor exclusively and simply analytical, but different histories will lean to one or other end of this continuum. Many histories will oscillate between narrative and a comparatively static analysis but general histories will lean more to the former. In exposition, as in most things, the general historian has to be eclectic.

Finally, who should write short or general history? Keith Sinclair wrote that short history should not be written by anyone who was not obsessively interested in the task. He meant this as a warning to historians who might be seduced by insistent publishers in the days when publishers wanted general histories. Sinclair meant that the short genre was not for every historian. It requires its own mental constitution, and certainly should command respect as a valid form of historiography. Like any other kind of history, authorship is and should be a matter of self selection. There is no training for it, other than writing history. I think that having wide reading interests helps: study other short histories and identify the attributes which distinguish the good ones. My personal view is that a dogmatic or doctrinaire historian should not attempt this genre. It requires a historian with a broad view of the past, with an eclectic approach, an ability to see at least two sides to every question so as to be able to provide a rounded and objective account of all issues and able to give fair attention to different themes and approaches. At the same time the historian should not be mentally anaemic, capable of only equivocally

summarising opinions. He must still leave a firm and consistent impression on the reader. I would want to apply these characteristics to all historians, but there is a risk for the writer of short history to be more than usually diffident or more than usually opinionated because of the lack of scope to defend or justify statements.

Since Sinclair's time, however, new questions have been raised about authorship in the form of suggestions of cultural proprietorship. One reviewer of my book asserted that it should be regarded as an interim work awaiting a Pacific Islander who would do the job properly. I have puzzled a good deal over this opinion, and still fail to see how race can be a qualification or embody any quality relevant to the task. Indeed, I cannot think of anything more inimical to scholarship than the doctrinaire view that membership of a race or culture is such a qualification, nor can I imagine how such an argument might be framed for a heterogeneous, polyglot, multi-racial and multi-cultural region like the Pacific. Nor can I see anything meritorious in the view, especially fashionable in some circles in New Zealand, that scholars of one race should have a prior claim to certain subjects over scholars of another race. What we should be concerned with is the advancement of knowledge. No-one should be discouraged from writing the history of any community on the grounds of race, gender or even voluntary membership. Writing history requires certain qualities of mind. Let those who can, do it. And if others can, let them do it too.

Writing a general history of the Pacific Islands presents no extraordinary difficulties that are not encountered by historians of any other diverse, multi-national region. But a large number of pragmatic decisions have to be made about scope, subject matter, organisation and treatment. The actual decisions may seem to others to be arbitrary.

The first consideration was scope: should one try to encompass the whole Pacific? Morrell used to say that the proper subject for a history was a community. The difficulty with the Pacific was the absence of an encompassing category and thus of a 'community' to be his subject. The goal of coherence and unity was therefore elusive. I think that this is why he called his book 'Britain in the Pacific Islands': only the role of Britain could give him the necessary thematic unity. In my case, I wanted to present a survey of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia without resorting to the same device, and yet the region was too diverse culturally and too scattered geographically to constitute a plausible unity.

But unity is to be found everywhere: it depends on the level of generalisation at which one is prepared to operate. What lends the Pacific Islands unity is the horticultural economic base, the oceanic environment (which of course does not apply to all Pacific Islanders, or even perhaps to a majority of them), and the absence of states before European contact. Taking

these three criteria together, the Pacific Islands have a roughly shared identity which justifies treating them together, while treating them separately from the histories of Japan, China, Alaska and Australia. But above all, what gives coherence to the subject as a whole is the fact of European contact through the medium of ocean voyaging. The impact of the European age creates a history for the Pacific Islands in the same way that voyaging creates a history for Southern Europe, West Asia and North Africa. The North Atlantic became a historical subject in the same way. Shared experience is the basis for shared historical investigation.

I found, therefore, that defining the geographical scope also imposed a definition of thematic scope. This has led some critics to describe the book (or me) as 'Eurocentric', evidently not understanding that the term describes an outlook rather than content. There can be no escaping the fact that European contact has been the most significant development in Pacific history since the coming of human colonists and every Pacific history has to give a central place to this phenomenon.

Having found a unifying theme, the next question was how to accommodate the diversity of the Pacific: how much should one attempt to generalise for the whole region, and how much should one indulge in particular discussions? A recurring observation or criticism has been that I have devoted so many pages to Polynesia, a lesser number to Melanesia, and fewer still to Micronesia. Only one reviewer so far has shown any insight into this alleged imbalance, saying that it either reflects the weighting of the sources or the historical priority of Polynesia in many developments, but that in either case it demonstrates a Western conception of history and an outsider's view of the Pacific.

There are two distinct issues here. The question of 'insiders" and 'outsiders" perspectives is the basis for the mistaken notion that only Pacific Islanders should write Pacific history. I do not accept this opinion even if it applies to a single, closed community: an historian who has 'inside' knowledge has advantages over one who does not, but all historians should write as if they were 'outsiders'. Be that as it may, for the historian to see the Pacific as a whole it is necessary to stand away from it. There can be no 'insider's' view of the Pacific as a whole because the 'insiders' did not apprehend it as a whole. The 'whole' indeed exists only as a creation of Western scholarship.

The comment that the historian conceptualises history in a Western way is scarcely a criticism. The study and writing of history is part of the Western intellectual tradition. Other cultures had various ways of their own of preserving or remembering the past, but to suggest that we historians should adopt those ways would be to abandon generations of intellectual effort devoted to refining and improving historical method. If we applied those exotic

ways to our own culture we probably would not want to use the term 'history' to describe the result.

However, the alleged imbalance referred to in my treatment of the three culture areas of the Pacific represents the best way to present Pacific history in a small compass. Because European activity is the unifying theme, and because (in general terms) European influence spread from east to west across the ocean, then certain themes are bound to be introduced in the context of Polynesia. The fullest exposition of those themes should take place where they first become important. As those themes become applicable to other areas, they do not need to be discussed in detail; to do so would be repetitious and tedious. The reader can be given some credit for transferring ideas from one context to another. Pacific history would be different, and would be written differently, if European influence had radiated from the Spanish possessions in the Marianas and Philippines. As it is, however, Polynesia has historical priority and therefore requires fuller discussion.

There is another reason: the various Polynesian states have more individuality in the historical record than do the constituent parts of Melanesia and Micronesia. The emergence of the distinct kingdoms of Polynesia demands separate discussion. There was no equivalent in Melanesia. Even more than in Polynesia, it is European activity that makes Melanesia the subject of the historian's keyboard. This is not to say that Melanesians are less human or less interesting than Polynesians, but the multiplicity of Melanesian communities are too obscure historically, and none of them coalesced into noticeable socio-political units in the 19th century. It would certainly have been unbalanced I think to have inflated my two chapters on 60 years of 19th century Melanesia to the same length treatment as 120 years of Polynesian history. Similarly, by the time Micronesia comes onto the historical stage, full discussion would necessitate even more repetition without offering a compensating increment of enlightenment. Giving every place its ration of pages would be rather like a theory of justice which treated every case equally, irrespective of the material differences between them, and would result in chaotic, meaningless chronicling. For the same reason, certain island groups in Polynesia are not discussed at all: they are generally small and insignificant, and although they might be interesting on a local scale, or interesting exemplars of cosmic issues, and their own histories vitally important to their people, their inclusion would add nothing to the overall pattern of change which is the real subject of the book. Similarly, if one is writing the history of the world, one is bound to say more about the history of France than about the history of Greenland.

In much the same way the 20th century received fewer pages than the 19th century. The reason is that the 20th century presents greater thematic unity than the 19th century, so that it lends itself to more economical discussion.

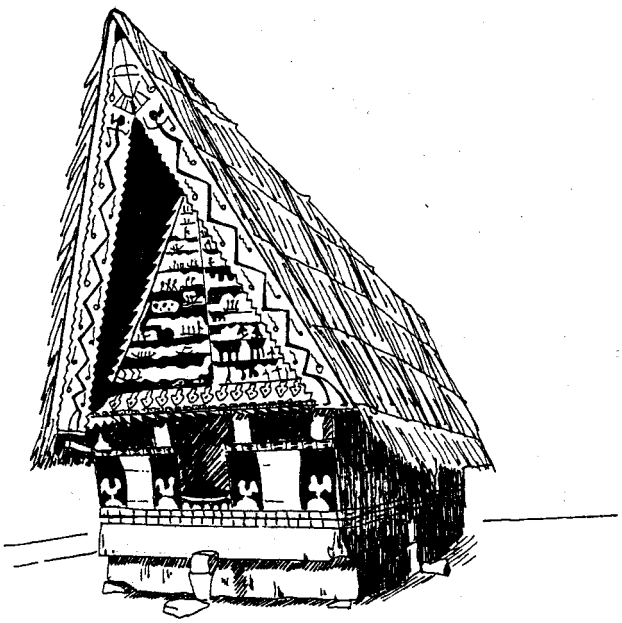
The alternative would have been to cover the same ground repeatedly in a procession through the different states and regions. In other words, the writer of short history has to consider the overall structure of the total story, not allocate pages on the basis of giving every category equal attention.

Length is an important variable, and a writer should work to a goal rather than fill pages with abandon and then prune, because length governs selection, and is directly related to style, treatment, and the reader's attention span. The result will be better if these things are thought of beforehand.

Mention has been made already of the difference between a short, general history and a reference book. It raises the question of how much detail should be included - how specific should a general history be? The answer seems evasive: only as much as is necessary to carry the narrative. Short, general histories almost invariably attract criticism for facts omitted and for errors of detail. Reviewers, indeed, are obsessive about such matters, but most of these criticisms miss the point of a short, general history which is that it is a statement about a large phenomenon, not a reference book. It is not a compendium of particular histories. The seeker of detail does not go to a book of this nature: he should consult an encyclopaedia, or an encyclopaedic history like *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, or a specialist history. A short general history exists to demonstrate the relationship between some sets of facts and other sets of facts. It shows its readers the sorts of questions that have been asked and might be asked and indicates the sorts of answers that might be found. The facts themselves are therefore apt to be illustrative rather than definitive, and error of detail (although undesirable) rarely makes any difference to the broad interpretation. The same point might be made about an index: it should be brief and general, referring to issues and categories of phenomena and not necessarily to details whose selection was perhaps arbitrary in the first place.

The approach to documentation follows from this policy. If detail is a comparatively low priority then detailed documentation is generally redundant. A more general indication of sources is sufficient, with the emphasis on those sources which will most meet the likely needs of the general reader. Thus, reference to unpublished or even periodical literature is not helpful. The bibliography therefore will be brief and take the form of a guide to the readers' next steps. Accordingly it should be arranged by topics even though this might require duplicated references or some clarifying comment on the adequacy or otherwise of the literature on given points. The reader of such books is not particularly interested in a bibliography which demonstrates the author's erudition or comprehensive indefatigability, but wants to know where to get more information. The criteria for inclusion should be authority, readability, availability and scope. Trade-offs may be necessary between these criteria in some cases.

All of these opinions may be summed up in the statement that for a brief, general history, the strengths and weaknesses of the intended readership must always be in the author's mind. Non-generalist reviewers, even those of goodwill, will usually be preoccupied with certain objective criteria, like detailed accuracy, the inclusion of certain esoterica or reference to a particular scholar, but the best guide came to me from a non-historian who read my manuscript and whose only comment was 'It makes you want to know more'. I believe that that is the function of short, general history.



FIVE

'My Place': Finding a Voice Within Pacific Colonial Studies*

PETER HEMPENSTALL

'ALL HISTORIANS LIVE with the certainty that someone will do the historiography of the history they write', remarked Greg Dening a trifle ruefully in 1988.[1] An unexceptional statement: but it says a great deal about the slow growth of Pacific history's view of itself that in the late 1980s, in the major journal in the field, it did not read like a truism. In the book *Historical disciplines and culture of Australasia*,[2] published in 1979, the chapter on Pacific history was the only one not to attempt a systematic view of its subject down through the decades. Instead it took the form of an edited report of a symposium in the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History at the Australian National University early in 1975. Attended by a select group of practitioners, the workshop was designed to sum up for the first time how members of the department went about their work of research and writing on the Pacific, and to discuss the problems peculiar to the subject area. It was chaired by Gavan Daws, who began with a short review of the 'Davidson tradition'.

I have been taken to task in the past for talking of a 'Davidson age', but it is clear from reading Daws's comments and a variety of surveys since then[3]

* The last paragraph of this paper will explain why I am indebted to Sally Morgan's *My Place* (Fremantle 1987) for the title.

[1] G. Dening, 'Reflection: on the cultural history of Marshall Sahlins and Valerio Valeri', *Journal of Pacific History*, 23 - *Pacific History Bibliography and Comment* (1988), 45-6.

[2] Ed. John Moses (St Lucia 1979). The chapter on Pacific history is titled 'On being a historian of the Pacific'.

[3] The following is a selection of recent historiographical surveys: Gavan Daws, 'Towards an agenda for the Pacific History Association', *PHA Newsletter*, 18 (1988), 2-8; F.X. Hezel, 'New directions in Pacific History: a practitioner's critical view', *Pacific Studies*, 11:3 (1988), 101-10; Max Quanchi, 'Pacific History - the view over the breakers', *Australian Historical Association Bulletin*, 61 (Dec. 1989), 9-17; N. Thomas, 'Partial texts: representation, colonialism and agency in Pacific history', *Journal of Pacific History*, 25 (1990), 139-58; Peter

that Davidson was the common ancestor for a substance and a style identified with Pacific history. And it is clear that Canberra controlled the terrain of the subject area for two decades at least, through institutional patronage of postgraduate students, possession of *The Journal of Pacific History* and a productive publishing programme. It is not relevant to explore that tradition here,[4] except to say that the heritage laid down under Davidson's tutelage consisted in a generation of clansmen (and some few women) precisely trained in the Anglo-Australian tradition of analytical narrative history, and imbued with the belief that the world could be seen with the eyes of Pacific Islanders if the proper controls were applied to the research. Most of the early work congregated around contact history, before the era of formal annexation by European powers and the evolution of colonial societies controlled more or less from states on the rim of the Pacific.

The Canberra clan did not have it all its own way. Younger initiates of the clan were progressively leaving the calm lagoon of pure research in Canberra to join other settlements in the open ocean; teaching and multidisciplinary contact were helping them to break new ground. Other descent groups were also threatening to invade the home territory. I see myself as belonging in this latter category - the Oxford based clan - outsiders from the start, but with migration and initiation links to Canberra.[5] Oxford's connection to Canberra was through Colin Newbury, a New Zealander with the first PhD from the Department of Pacific History at the ANU. He left the antipodes to teach in West Africa, before acquiring a toe-hold in Oxford as part of Commonwealth, specifically African, studies. I found a place with Newbury and studied with South Africans, Zimbabweans, Kenyans and the occasional American. We rubbed shoulders with the gurus of imperialism studies - Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, David Fieldhouse and others.

The training regimen was different. As fieldwork was less possible in the first instance, we were geared to exploiting foreign language archives and to applying perspectives drawn from African and European history. The thematic focus was often the period after colonial annexation and the approach encouraged was comparative, across a range of colonial fragments that were

Hempenstall, 'The line of descent: creating Pacific histories in Australasia', in John Moses (ed.), *Historical disciplines and culture in Australasia*, 2nd edn (Brisbane forthcoming).

[4] I have discussed the Davidson tradition in more detail in Hempenstall, 'The line of descent'.

[5] Other clans include one with its origins and culture heroes in Melbourne, represented in the work of Gavan Daws and Greg Dening. The prehistorians constitute a quite separate tribe with extensive trade links to Pacific history. Scholarly missionaries fit the same model. Other academic clans with their own reproductive programmes have originated in New Zealand, the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of the South Pacific, and Hawaii.

more typically the individual areas of study for Australian-trained students. Oxford projected an explicit distaste for the Balkanisation of 'imperial/colonial history' into area, regional or even Third World studies. Ignorance of the parallel histories of other colonies within a common imperial experience was inexcusable. Metropolitan societies as the seedbeds of forms of empire overseas - vital to understanding colonising cultures and policy - was a theme drummed into our seminar discussions.[6]

I have wrestled with creating a suitable autobiographical jacket with which to clothe my place within this tradition. In many ways I went off on a tangent from colleagues, to study the reactions of colonial subjects, rather than policy and ideas: specifically to study the strategies of resistance to colonial rule, with special reference to the German empire. The temptation is great to romanticise this choice as a gesture of solidarity by one of the Vietnam generation who escaped by the skin of his teeth, and now was able generously to act out a personal intellectual protest against imperialism. There was nothing of that. When I left the University of Queensland at the end of 1969 I was not yet very politicised over Vietnam, for in colonial Queensland on the eve of the Bjelke Petersen ascendancy civil liberties in the streets was the issue of protest (as they still were 20 years later). I was involved in those campaigns but cannot honestly claim that they reverberated in my protest studies in Oxford. A year studying at the University of Hamburg, West Germany, in 1970 certainly caught me up in the student revolutions on the continent and I watched the professoriate being reduced to the ranks. But that proved a rather short-lived and illusory revolution, as one noticed with every return visit to Germany. The inspiration from that experience is problematic at best.

In truth, I think we usually alight upon our intellectual projects through logical circumstance within the structures which control our socialisation. A supervisor's latest project is important - Newbury's own searches into West African protest certainly illuminated my progress. And of course my access to the incredibly rich harvest of German materials (still far from exhausted) in both west and east was an opportunity even a callow postgraduate student with a minimum of imagination could readily grasp. Contacts with the first generation of colonial resistance historians - Terrence Ranger, Ali Mazrui, Robert Rotberg, John Iliffe - in England stirred the pot. I suspect that the brew was completed by a certain subaltern response on my part to the whole Oxford tradition. I was a colonial Queenslander - worse, a colonial Queenslander from a militantly defensive, minority Catholic subculture -

[6] A pertinent perspective on the Oxford tradition is contained in Michael Brock's introduction to the special issue of the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12, (1984), devoted to Freddie Madden. Madden in many ways embodies the Oxford clan spirit.

suddenly expected to perform at the centre of Empire, and straining against the easy, confident assumptions of intellectual and political superiority represented by the pipe-smoking, tweed coated, politely reserved élite of Oxford. If they were interested in metropolitan, imperial factors, I was for the fortunes and strategies of those who, like me, felt colonised and intimidated by the imperial mentality.

Twenty years on, doing one's historiography has become a complicated task, not least because one is elected by colleagues as belonging to a certain field rather than claiming it as one's own. I have been chosen as representing a colonial historian, though I have wandered more in other pastures outside the Pacific these past few years. The field of Pacific history itself is widely dispersed through the growth of several self-reproducing clans, each with its own training grounds and theoretical interests. No longer is there a single line of descent through the discipline of History. Nor is it easy anymore to define 'mainstream' concerns. The notion of history has broadened: we face what one literary theorist has called a 'meltdown' of disciplinary approaches.[7] Pacific history has been dragged kicking and screaming into the postmodern era, joining in discussions about forms of representation and the politics of scholarship. The explosion in creative writing and artistic representation of historical images in the region has added to the diversity of philosophical approaches.

One subject of enquiry has consistently been at the heart of practitioners' concerns. As Nicholas Thomas has written: 'Colonial transactions and representations, conceived in the broadest sense, pervade the subject matter of Pacific history'.[8] Though the Davidson age concentrated on the phases of contact before the era of territorial colonialism, most studies also dealt more or less with questions of domination, of power, of race relations and the evolution of political communities. There has been less systematic coverage of the period beginning with the late 19th century annexations. The rim settler societies of Australia, New Zealand and North America have not figured as central to the concerns of most people who call themselves Pacific historians, though their histories of colonialism are shot through with connections to the islands.

Histories of colonialism there have been, but they tend to be bound by the priorities within the lines of descent enumerated, subject to career accident and to individual interest or ideology. In the one empirical exercise for this paper I went through a selection of the major journals associated with Pacific history and listed articles that could be construed as dealing with the

[7] Ken Ruthven in discussion at the Histories in Cultural Systems Conference, Humanities Research Centre, University of Melbourne, Oct. 1991.

[8] Thomas, 'Partial texts', 141.

phenomenon of territorial colonialism from the late 19th century on. To my surprise - for I was looking for evidence that would clinch my contention that Pacific historians have ignored the colonial state - I discovered that just on 50% of the articles in *The Journal of Pacific History* and *Pacific Studies* between 1980 and 1990 dealt with colonial empires up to World War II, or some aspect of colonial policy or the relations between rulers and ruled. Periodicals like *Journal de la Société des Oceanistes* and *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* contained far fewer - roughly one quarter and one fifth respectively. Articles on the post-colonial state took up about 30% of *JPH* and *Pacific Studies*, but most of these were political surveys of current events. There were almost no analyses of the colonial state as a system with articulated ancillary organisations. Still, given the weight of books on the earlier contact periods, these figures suggest that the material already exists for someone to attempt a large adventurous sweep across systems of colonial rule.

The area that enjoys the greatest volume of scholarly work on territorial colonialism is Melanesia, and within Melanesia, Papua New Guinea. Because of their close historical association, Australians have a long tradition of writing about colonial rule in Papua New Guinea, but early works were fragments of the imperial history tradition, specifically oriented towards analysing colonial policies by Australian, German or British governments.[9] It took an outsider, the American Stephen Winsor Reed, to breach the boundaries of colonial history as it was practised before World War II. In *The making of modern New Guinea* Reed applied an American cultural systems analysis to the structures of Australia's colonial rule, rather than the British model of functionalist social anthropology to which Australian scholars were accustomed, and which made them comfortable with the colonial project. Reed set out 'to gain a synoptic picture of the whole variegated life of the Territory'.[10] The result was the depiction of a 'Kanaka culture' and a sealed off European colonial society emerging from 70 years of contact, with its revolutionary demands upon Melanesian economic and social structures and its attendant caste barriers. World War II seemed to put an end to this adventurous schematising.

Two other non-historian generalisers were at the top of my early list of authorities on Papua New Guinea: Charles Rowley and H.C. Brookfield. Rowley's *New Guinea villager*[11] presented a comprehensive analysis of the

[9] For instance Lewis Lett, *The Papuan achievement* (Melbourne 1944), L. Mair, *Australia in New Guinea* (London 1948), J.D. Legge, *Australian colonial policy* (Sydney 1956), F. West, *Hubert Murray, the Australian proconsul* (Melbourne 1968).

[10] S.W. Reed, *The making of modern New Guinea* (Stanford 1943), x.

[11] C.D. Rowley, *The New Guinea villager. A retrospect from 1964* (Melbourne 1965).

colonial process that still seems to me to possess historical depth, judicious judgement and felicitous prose - the latter was always an important ingredient in history written in the Anglo-Australian literary tradition. Brookfield's *Melanesia: a geographical interpretation* and *Colonialism, development and independence*[12] introduced me to the spatial dimensions of colonial rule and to a language of systems and networks that required a different reading from historians. But this pre-ethnographic history social science approach seemed overly guided by what Brookfield called the bounded rationality of systems[13] and in most hands (there were always honourable exceptions like Richard Salisbury and Peter Lawrence) left little room for the array of historical exceptions to their formulas. In the tradition of Western Enlightenment rationalism their 'abstract framework of presumed inter-relations'[14] reduced all behaviour to economy and order and unity. Whereas the historical record flowing through my hands was full of baroque extravagance, disorder and confusion. Even Jim Davidson's Naval Handbooks on Melanesia in the 1940s[15] contained a different kind of contingency and liveliness, which was more characteristic of the history written about Papua New Guinea from the 1960s.

The establishment of the University of Papua New Guinea in 1966 provided a forum and the machinery for new approaches to the history of the region. History courses at UPNG played an important role, as Darressalaam and Makarere universities did in East Africa, in helping to build up a sense of national identity among the emergent élite. As in Africa, the history of colonial rule bore the brunt of that intellectual building process and a succession of readings, short political histories and regional studies were laid down during the 1960s and 1970s which themselves bore the trace of African historiography.[16] The liberal optimists versus the cautiously radical pessimists, was how Donald Denoon summed up the latest batch of these approaches published in 1979.[17] The history often tended to be about us

[12] H.C. Brookfield (with Doreen Hart), *Melanesia: a geographical interpretation of an island world* (London 1971) and H.C. Brookfield, *Colonialism, development and independence. The case of the Melanesian islands in the South Pacific* (Cambridge 1972).

[13] Brookfield, *Colonialism*, 159.

[14] Gunnar Myrdal, quoted in Brookfield, *Colonialism*, 202.

[15] Naval Intelligence Division, *Pacific Islands. Volume IV. Western Pacific* (London 1945).

[16] A representative selection must include: Hank Nelson, *Papua New Guinea: black unity or black chaos?* (Harmondsworth 1972); B. Jinks et al., *Readings in New Guinea history* (Sydney 1973); J.L. Whittaker et al., *Documents and readings in New Guinea history* (Brisbane 1975); E.P. Wolfers, *Race relations and colonial rule in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney 1976); J. Griffin et al., *A political history of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne 1979); *New Guinea Research Bulletins* (Canberra); the published volumes of the Waigani seminars.

[17] D. Denoon, 'Papua New Guinea', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 9 (1981), 341.

rather than them. It generalised mostly political events and took European periodisations for granted. Denoon in another place also suggested that histories of colonialism had been too broad, even superficial, in painting in the general outlines of Papua New Guinea's social history before the necessary detail of administrative and economic history had been explored.[18]

This evolution was nicely summed up and given potent symbolic form in the Centennial History Seminar of November 1984, to 'celebrate' the annexation of the country 100 years before. The government of Papua New Guinea paid to bring a regiment of scholars to Port Moresby from around the country, and from Australia and Europe - not without rebellious mutterings by some local citizens - to assess the record of 100 years of colonial rule. At Matupit Island in the Gazelle they dug up the lead-encased stump of an original German flag pole and dressed it in frangipani and bougainvillea. On 3 November, to the accompaniment of a band playing 'Waltzing Matilda' and 'Australia will be there' and 'Deutschland ũber alles', the flag of the Federal Republic of Germany was raised between those of the nation of PNG and the province of East New Britain. A choir from a local convent sang a medieval motet. On the eve of the seminar the scholars stood around comfortably at Government House in Konedobu feeding on continental savouries while a police band played a selection of cosmopolitan airs. Telegrams of congratulation (for exactly what was not clear at the time) were read out, the Queen of Papua New Guinea was toasted and the band struck up the national anthems of the three countries involved in this replaying of roles. I remember standing on the steps of Parliament House a few days later and looking across to the Australian High Commission. The complex was sporting a new and forbidding security fence. Its twin had recently appeared on television, encasing the then American embassy in Lebanon. Up behind a rise was the Indonesian embassy ringed by a double barbed wire fence. Papua New Guinea's two most consistent reference points were fencing the rest of the country out while down in Moresby the population was busy fencing itself in against the disorders of urban living.

Here was a metaphor for the real nature of colonialist history in Melanesia - a largely private argument among the colonial patrons of a developing Third World nation state, which was caught between two powerful and ultimately exploitative neighbours while it subsidised the patron's retrospective breast-beating.

It took another five years for the results of that seminar to see the light of day. This was a pity for the papers in general reflected well the growing understanding of the complex operations of the colonial state and several

[18] D. Denoon, review in *Journal of Pacific History*, 18 - *Pacific History Bibliography and Comment* (1983), 69.

provided a partial anatomy of its instrumentalities. The time lag in publication is itself evidence of the slow drag in systematic colonial studies in the Pacific. The volume *Papua New Guinea: a century of colonial impact*[19] is valuable for freezing a moment in historiographical time but the perspective for judgements has already shifted perceptibly. How would Fiji, New Caledonia and Bougainville affect those judgements today, seven years later, let alone Maori New Zealand, Aboriginal Australia and eastern Europe?[20]

Genuinely radical critiques of the colonial state in Melanesia appear somewhat isolated in the field, without the support of a network of similar studies or approaches that might constitute a 'school' of Marxist or neo-Marxist models. The best known general work remains Azeem Amarshi, Kenneth Good and Rex Mortimer's *Development and dependency: the political economy of Papua New Guinea*.[21] The authors interpret the colonial history of the area in terms of the development of peripheral capitalism and class structure, the changing global context, and continuing forms of dependency. They have been criticised by detractors and supporters alike for asserting rather than demonstrating a significant degree of class formation early in the colonial experience, and for their reductionist tendencies where complex regional, ethnic and gendered community identities operate. This has continued to be the Achilles' heel of the large, generalising ventures of the *oeuvre*.[22] The colonial state was (and still is) far from pervasive in the lives of most Melanesians. Churches envelop far more, yet we know little about their economic structures and activities either within or without the borders of state activity.

The most coherent structural examination of colonialism in Papua New Guinea comes to us again by courtesy of a non-historian - Peter Fitzpatrick's *Law and state in Papua New Guinea*.[23] In his relentless demonstration of the argument that 'bourgeois legality' - a panoply of legal definitions, prescriptions and institutions - was at the heart of the state's demands on the people, and that this law was perceived by ordinary folk as the core of the colonial experience, Fitzpatrick has given flesh to a skeletal system of territorial

[19] S. Lātūkefu (ed.), *Papua New Guinea: a century of colonial impact 1884-1984* (Port Moresby 1989).

[20] The proceedings of a 1985 seminar by European experts at the Australian National University on 10 years of independence for Papua New Guinea have never seen the light of day, though publication was planned. They run the risk of being obsolete in 1992.

[21] A. Amarshi et al., *Development and dependency: the political economy of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne 1979).

[22] Two other studies with the same shape and the same flaws are A. Mamak and Ahmed Ali, *Race, class and rebellion in the South Pacific* (Suva 1979), and M. Howard and S. Durutalo, *The political economy of the South Pacific to 1945* (Townsville 1987).

[23] P. Fitzpatrick, *Law and state in Papua New Guinea* (London 1980).

colonial rule. It has not yet been bettered. The history tends to be at times static, a little formulaic, but *Law and state* is a book with a thousand hidden caves, waiting for the light of many case studies to be thrown upon its recesses. How much exposure do our students - honours students looking for thesis topics especially - get to a book like this in teaching courses, I wonder?

My question about students has particular force when it comes to information about the post-colonial, or post-independence states of the Pacific. In Australia discussion about the Pacific Island states that have joined the world community since Western Samoa's independence in 1962 goes on as if in a cone of silence. Sylvia Lawson has pointed out that in relation to the Pacific, the absences from public discussion are so big we hardly see them.[24] Most Australians simply do not notice that we are part of the Pacific. Our TV screens are full of the collapse of the Berlin wall, the democratic revolutions of eastern Europe, the resurgent nationalisms within the bankrupt USSR. Australians were happy to sail obediently off to the Gulf War to defend an undemocratic sheikhdom from an undemocratic Muslim warlord. But struggles over community reform and national development strategies, conflicts about new forms of breakaway nationalism in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, West Irian, Vanuatu, Tonga, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, transformations of colonialism in Micronesia, or in New Zealand and Australia do not register as such in the public psyche. They are submerged under the tourism supplements or the narrow entertainment priorities of media outlets. Bougainville and Fiji fare better than most - at the moment. There is next to nothing on the Torres Strait Islands, and most Australians would not know where Irian Jaya lies.

The issue is brought home to me every year when my classes attempt to debate the inevitability or otherwise of the Fiji coups. Ignorance of recent Pacific struggles to reshape institutions and redistribute power is monumental. More embarrassing is the easy assertion of prejudice as argument in relation to questions of ethnic nationalism versus community political rights. Nationalism based on ethnic exclusivism is natural. Indigenous racism is 'good', or at least supportable. Pacific Indians and other Asians represent the dark side of paradise steadily being lost. The notion of a political dynamic whereby ethnically plural communities can engage without violence in a reasonably equitable power-sharing contest is a Western liberal 'construct' not suited to 'indigenous' ('native' societies also still get a run in my classes) societies nor wanted by them. The illusory 'end of history' in Europe and the resurgence of narrow nationalisms there only serve to underline this lesson for them.

[24] Sylvia Lawson, 'Berlin to Suva (if you can get there)', *Australian Society* (Dec. 1989/Jan. 1990), 31.

Have historians been accomplices in this continuation of ignorance and unexamined prejudice? Until the barrels of guns shattered cosy analyses by the academy, the tendency was strong in the pages of current events articles to take the post-colonial state for granted in the form that it entered independence (Pacific Islands writers equally made the same assumption). Our heightened sensitivity to 'culture reading' and to the theoretical bases of ethnicity (rather than to old fashioned racism) has produced good academic exercises. But it has also confused students with muted judgements over rights and wrongs in particular conflicts. Arguments among academics and activists over the Fiji coups have been a healthy sign of movement. But they have tended to take the form of present-centred, political science analyses, as though the issues centre round present alignments, political parties and bureaucratisation, rather than vertical shaft sinking historical examinations, tracing the deep seated structures of colonialism that are being re-enacted and re-embraced in the present discontents.

J.W. Davidson established a tradition of political involvement in the decolonising activities of Pacific colonies - 'passionate partisanship', he dubbed it.[25] But as Nicholas Thomas has pointed out,[26] the context for that kind of engagement has altered irrevocably, and the choices to be made among shifting factions, philosophies and strategies are very much more complex in the 1990s. There is, however, still room for histories of colonialism to be a moral force by embracing longer perspectives on present struggles. As part of that approach our Australian/European/Western imaginings of the Pacific's past and the projection of our sympathies and prejudices bear examination. Vijay Mishra has argued persuasively that Indo-Fijians have been excluded from all forms of Fijian representations: they have been refused a legitimate Pacific identity. Listening to my students retail their anecdotal prejudices against Indians in this country strengthens my conviction that Mishra is right.[27]

> It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views, turned under habit and over time, into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale.[28]

This is the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner talking about white Australia's treatment of Aboriginal history for much of the 20th century. The same applies to common Australian perceptions of the Pacific, and indeed the perceptions of some Pacific Islanders themselves to quadrants of their

[25] J.W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa* (Melbourne 1967), x.
[26] Thomas, 'Partial texts', 142.
[27] Vijay Mishra, 'Little India', *Meanjin*, 49:4 (1990), 611.
[28] W.H. Stanner, *After the dreaming* (Australian Broadcasting Commission 1968), 24-5.

landscape. A vital role for studies of the post-colonial state is to open many more windows, to be able to see every corner of the colonial landscape from a variety of positions. W.K. Hancock's trilogy of principles for historical method - attachment, justice and span - is still the best piece of surveying equipment for such a task (along with a suitable appreciation of the contingency of our own perceptions). Historians themselves, of course, are unable to do any of this without being absolutely clear about their own philosophies and strategies of commitment to particular sets of values, rather than to communities or individuals.

A focus on the emergent nation states of the Pacific and on their particular colonial experiences under British, French, German or American imperialism identifies the newer colonial history. It succeeded the older imperial history which dealt with metropolitan links and 'native' policy. Imperial history was gradually discredited by its élitist tone and teleological assumptions about the 'manifest destiny' of empires.[29] In that abandonment we have sacrificed something of the intellectual unity which characterised Oxbridge histories of empire. These drew on the belief in a common stock of imperial practices to make comparisons of policy and institutions and ideas across colonies.

Historians of colonialism in the Pacific have not achieved similar comparative work of any depth. Most histories have been microcosmic investigations of particular problems or experiences, or shaped around the colonial history of particular national empires. An early brave attempt by Kerry Howe to compare race relations in Australia and New Zealand was savaged as 'subliminally tarted up bourgeois ideology' which begged numerous questions and ignored issues of social stratification in its empiricist survey approach.[30] It is unlikely that other historians were frightened off trying by such a response, but there is a very clear parochialism among Pacific historians of the territorial colonial period. They have accepted the limits of the colonial empires laid down by the colonists themselves. They have collaborated again in accepting the boundaries drawn around 'our' Pacific Ocean so that lessons, models, experiences in other areas just outside the rim of 'our' Pacific are largely excluded. Indonesia's colonial empire is not really 'our' Pacific, nor the Philippines, nor South America. Micronesia's experience of colonialism is apparently in such a foreign country, where they did things so differently, that it does not have much bearing on colonial experiences in

[29] D.K. Fieldhouse discusses the fate of imperial history in his article 'Can Humpty Dumpty be put together again: imperial history in the 1980s', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12 (1984), 9-23.

[30] M. Hartwig, 'Theoretic history by osmosis: the language of common sense and the comparative history of "race relations" in Australia and New Zealand', *Aboriginal History*, 2:2 (1978), 171.

the southwest Pacific. The island, the area, the empire set the limits, not the questions being asked here or elsewhere.

Other, non-Pacific oriented scholars are permitted to set the agenda for the Pacific: Rudolf Albertini's *European colonial rule*, and David Fieldhouse's *Economics and empire*[31] have served as indispensable starting points for historians of colonial empire in Europe. Both attempt giant sweeps across colonialist structures and styles. Yet Fieldhouse deals with the Pacific out of antiquated secondary sources which freeze Pacific colonialism in an older fashioned imperial modality. Albertini does not mention the Pacific at all in more than 500 pages.

Donald Denoon has been an honourable exception to this pattern. He has been a consistent promoter of more lateral perspectives that force new questionings on familiar material. His continued temerity in suggesting such a course of action for Australian history still draws tetchy responses, most recently in October 1991, by Bill Gammage who has long and strong links with Pacific history himself.[32] Gammage seems to argue that a national history is still a necessary orientation for Australian historians, until there are enough answers to tackle wider questions; moreover, that such a focus is more progressive than the 'European historiographical tradition' that Denoon is presumed to inhabit. Even if true for Australia - and I doubt it - this is a dangerous illusion if applied to Pacific colonial history. True, like does not compare with unlike. Colonial empires and the behaviour of people who lived in them over varying periods of time are not simple wholes that bear automatic comparison. But questions taken from areas outside the Pacific, or from the histories of rim societies like Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Indonesia - especially Indonesia at this moment - or comparisons between like aspects of policy, behaviour, symbols or language within the Pacific can and do suggest hypotheses usefully applied within present areas of research, even if they are then discarded as inapplicable. In the area of colonial studies, just about every other geographical region outside the Pacific has a longer, more distinguished pedigree of such scholarship.[33]

[31] R. von Albertini with A. Wirz, *European colonial rule 1880-1940* (Westport 1982), and D.K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and empire* (London 1973).

[32] Bill Gammage, 'Open and closed historiographies: comment', *Australian Historical Studies*, 24 (1991), 443-6.

[33] One thinks of S. Popkin, *The rational peasant* (Berkeley 1979) and James Scott, *The moral economy of the peasant* (New Haven 1976) on peasant culture; the *Subaltern Studies* series; A. Mazrui, *The warrior tradition in modern Africa* (Leiden 1977) on African warrior culture; L. Gann and P. Duignan on various national colonial administrative services (*The rulers of German Africa*, *The rulers of Belgian Africa*, *The rulers of British Africa*,); C. Dewey and A.G. Hopkins, *The imperial conflict. Studies in the economic history of Africa and India* (1977). It would be churlish not to mention the comparative approach in the Pacific of writers like Jean Chesneaux, A.L. Epstein, Roger Keesing, Nicholas Thomas and Alan Ward.

Especially is there room for ethnographic histories of the culture of colonisers in the Islands - the governors, district officers, police, customs officials, school teachers, evangelists, merchants etc., the whole 'monstrous regiment of adventurers'.[34] How did they do their work day to day? What metropolitan traditions of socialisation and training did they carry with them and how did these affect their relations with one another and with their subjects? How were local administrations articulated with colonial police forces, navies, companies, banks, churches? What role did advancing communication systems play in penetrating Island societies? A hundred more such questions taken from work done elsewhere, or suggested by comparisons in the Pacific could be posed. The nuts and bolts of empire have been forged for Africa, for instance, under the escutcheon of the conservative historiography of Lewis Gann and Peter Duignan.[35] We in the Pacific have the advantage of being able to draw on the more dynamic tradition of Subaltern Studies of recent years. We would benefit from turning the blow torch of their strategy onto the belly of the coloniser's culture, turning their world upside down, anatomising the culture of the dominant, exploring their ties of kinship and loyalty, their language of power, their symbols of superiority.[36] There is no better self-scrutinising witness than George Orwell in his *Burmese Days* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* to demonstrate the contradictions inherent in the domains of power occupied with such seeming confidence but such real hollowness by colonial rulers.

Such a research strategy would be particularly instructive for studying Australian colonising culture on the continent and in the Islands. Australians are rarely confronted by their histories of colonialism in the Pacific. Historians may have begun the task of interfering with Australian totems at home, like mateship, our military activities, social welfare and immigration history, our labour aristocracy, but Australia's Pacific history does not yet disturb the quiet tenor of our myths about ourselves.

David Fieldhouse, in a recent attempt to salvage something from the wreckage of imperial history, talked about the interstices of empire left over

[34] A.E. Afigbo, 'Men of two continents: an African interpretation', *Proconsuls of empire. European Governors in Africa* (New York 1978), 524.

[35] L. Gann and P. Duignan, *The rulers* (1977, 1978, 1979), also their *White settlers in tropical Africa* (Harmondsworth 1962) and *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, 5 vols. (Cambridge 1969-75). See A. Porter's review article, 'A regiment of rulers', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 9 (1981), 331-40.

[36] As well as the several volumes of Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian history and society*, pub. Delhi from 1982 on, one should consult R. Guha, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India* (Delhi 1983), and R. Guha and G.C. Spivak (eds), *Selected subaltern studies* (Oxford 1988).

for the imperial historian to exploit.[37] His 'area of interaction' approach would concentrate on areas of metropolitan history affected by imperialist activities and vice versa - patterns of foreign policy, of trade and capital investment, the rise and fall of particular industries, the character of armed forces, the culture of metropolitan bureaucracies. These impacts are incontrovertible and measurable, and constitute a productive linking of new localised colonial histories with the older imperial approach. The 'imperial factor' should not be allowed to drop off the agenda of Pacific history altogether. The heritage of empire remains crucial to the present of Pacific Island nation states, as to their past. The world of which they are now a part fundamentally includes the world of which their previous (or current) master is also a part. The populations of these states are still influenced by that heritage and the *history* of that heritage of constitutions, parties, bureaucracies, economic ties, literature and mentalities, whether they experienced foreign colonial rule or not. Euro-America may be the new periphery of colonial studies but it should be integrated with the shifting centres in the Pacific to complete the circle.

The post-colonial project is not just about altering the *content* of colonial studies. It is also about decolonising ways of representing pasts that we are engaged with. Images of the Pacific still suffer from the Orientalist virus.[38] Historians may have moved beyond the Noble Savage in their dialogue with one another, but she/he is still alive in public discourse. Pick up any tourist brochure to see the point; think about to the world media characterisation of the Western Samoan rugby team in the World Cup, as embodying 'authentic exuberance', 'explosiveness' and 'physicality'. Though most of the team live and work in New Zealand, these were clearly separate, and uneasily threatening Polynesian attributes in the eyes of the West. Even the empathic historian has collaborated in shaping a race of sharply entrepreneurial, combat-tested, land-loving, kinship-united, shrewdly manipulative beings of the South Seas - what postmodernists call 'essentialising' Pacific Islanders, by simply reversing the categories of the Noble Savage. Along with this we have accepted European markers for periodising significant history and continued to work from the same records base, changing the angle at which we interrogate it, perhaps adding oral evidence to supplement the detail, but rarely daring to disrupt the dominant narrative form of story.

We remain heirs to Enlightenment rationalism and each of us has her/his own voice to find within that tradition. But as specialists in examining the human condition across cultural spaces we also have the responsibility to give voice to other cultures, other epistemologies, as well as to this and other

[37] Fieldhouse, 'Humpty Dumpty', 16ff.
[38] As elucidated and interpreted by Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1979).

times. Though we may all have separate arguments with post modernist challenges to the stability of our historical texts, historians of colonialism at least need to enter certain areas of their conversation on the road to better (and that begs a thousand questions) history.

Firstly, we must plunge beyond the overwhelmingly political settings of our traditional analysis of the colonial experience to its cultural meanings, a point made in various places by Nicholas Thomas.[39] Connected to this shift in our directional gaze is the investigation of colonialism in its relational aspects, as represented in the Subaltern Studies strategy. Instead of seeing discrete classes of rulers versus ruled, or simply reversing the polarities of good and bad, Subaltern Studies disrupts conventional categories of analysis by exploring the power relations within and across a variety of domains - linguistic, economic, social and cultural. Not history with the politics left out but an intensely political history with the politics of power dissected in every corner of culture. Subaltern Studies strikes at most of what has passed for anti-colonial history by pursuing an 'insurgent' readings of documents and histories that purport to get at the essence of a problem. Much of the documentation used by colonial historians, whatever their agenda, is shown to be élite-oriented and 'counter-insurgent' in its provenance and language.[40] Gender studies is another form of relational history which demands different forms of representation, not just a rearrangement of content.

A third method of decolonising our colonial texts is to let Third World voices invade our First World texts more often and to greater effect. I do not suggest that Pacific history has entirely evaded this responsibility in the past. One of the traditions associated with the Davidson age was the publishing of Pacific texts like *The book of Luelen*, which only recently has been laid open to skilful deconstruction by David Hanlon.[41] Post colonial literature by Albert Wendt, Epeli Hau'ofa, Vijay Mishra, Ihimaeara and others are examples of Pacific voices constructing the world through an Oceanic discourse. Nor am I suggesting that only Pacific Islanders should be left to write histories about the Pacific, as though they 'own' the past to which we are all tied.[42] But we

[39] Thomas, 'Partial texts'; N. Thomas, 'Sanitation and seeing: the creation of state power in early colonial Fiji', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32:1 (1990), 149-70.

[40] Gyan Prakash has a good analysis of the Subaltern Studies strategies in his 'Writing post-colonial histories of the third world: perspectives from Indian historiography', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32:1 (1990), 383-408.

[41] *The Book of Luelen* was written by Luelen Bernart and published in Canberra in 1977. Hanlon's analysis is in his 'The path back to Pohnsakar: Luelen Bernart, his book, and the practice of history on Pohnpei', *Isla*, 1:1 (1991).

[42] This battleground moves periodically around the region. The latest skirmish appeared in the pages of *The Contemporary Pacific*: Haunani-Kay Trask, 'Natives and anthropologists: the colonial struggle', 3:1 (1991) and Roger Keesing's response in the same issue.

too often translate Pacific history into the realist idiom, structures and narratives of Western historiography, ignoring Pacific historical sensibilities and leaving us in control of the Word that becomes their History.[43] I am arguing for Western historians to reach across the boundaries of their writing strategies to bring voices and visual images and rhythms of Oceanic history within the compass of their own texts.

It is difficult to give examples without talking about an area of historical literature which I used to think lagged behind Pacific history in its thematic concerns and cross-cultural understandings - Aboriginal history. The heterogeneity of the wealth of texts now available on the colonial experiences of Aborigines suggests that Aboriginal history has leapt far ahead. One could spend a conference exploring the deliberately varied nature of autobiographical writings by Aboriginal women and men, or the fractured narrative of Stephen Muecke's *Reading the country*, or the hidden histories of that gigantic colonial project, the Australian cattle industry, filtered through Deborah Bird Rose's book of the same name.[44] My favourite little book is Margaret Somerville and Patsy Cohen's *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs*. This concerns a project to recover the structural and emotional history of a group of individuals who lived on a reserve, Ingelba, south of Armidale in New South Wales, under the old state Protection legislation. It is a collaborative work by an Aboriginal woman and her white female historian friend to lay down a deposit of history that would link the now-dispersed community (and Patsy Cohen, the woman) personally with the land and their former experiences on it.

The entire project is an exercise in 'decentring': the traditional research framework was moved out of its original academic power base in order to connect with the Aborigines in a domain they could relate to. This involved a constant shifting of the centre of Margaret Somerville's European perspective, a continuing negotiation between Margaret Somerville, Patsy Cohen, their informants and collaborators over their relative positions in the exercise. Research proceeded by way of traditional documentary searches and oral history gathering. But it also took the form of enacting the history: staging a

[43] Chris Healy discusses this problem in respect of Aboriginal history in '"We know your mob now": histories and their cultures', *Meanjin*, 49:3 (1990), 512-23.

[44] Autobiographies include Sally Morgan, *My Place* (Fremantle 1987), Ruby Langford, *Don't take your love to town* (Ringwood 1988), Labumore [Elsie Roughsey], *An Aboriginal mother tells of the old and the new* (Fitzroy 1984). Krim Benterrak, Stephen Muecke and Paddy Roe, *Reading the country. Introduction to nomadology* (Fremantle) was published in 1984. Debra Bird Rose's *Hidden histories. Black stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill stations* (Canberra) was published in 1991. One should also mention the film *'Too many Captain Cooks'*, and Chris Healy's unpublished paper 'History under the hammer', Histories in Cultural Systems conference, Melbourne 1991.

journey back to Ingelba for the people who belonged there and recording their re-identification with the sites and symbols in the landscape, their once again nurturing of the country. Photographs and interventions from the informants interrupt the story. The authors wrestle with words and forms of representation so that the artistic struggle - the struggle to make sense of the experience in multiple ways - is embodied in the text.[45]

Such techniques are experimental. They mean surrendering a dependence on realist narrative form, which moves inexorably along a sequential line of our own making towards the present. Use the 'trash of history', argues Klaus Neumann, quoting Walter Benjamin, 'literary montage', juxtaposing subjective observations by the author 'with bits of transcribed oral testimony, excerpts from archival records with visual images of people and place, representations of the present with representations of the past, statistical data with excursions into the philosophy of history.'[46] Employing these is an attempt to simulate Another's historical imagination. According to Neumann, the method releases the Western straitjacket of control over other peoples' history that we exert by inserting their words into our linear stories as narrative reinforcement.[47] It is also truer to the self-laden nature of the accounts that we as tellers of colonial histories stitch and weave together. 'Mythographies', such stories have been dubbed,[48] which suggests a more ambiguous reading of the past than our confident narratives conventionally portray.

Inserting plural modes of knowing the Pacific past into our histories requires different disciplines from those into which we have been comfortably socialised. Multiple voices will not simply emerge from the record: we must chase them with new readings of old records and the use of our present experience as historians. We must be educated in the systems of signification operative in the society we are examining. We should celebrate the baroque that spills from our research and experience, and let the oral quality of Oceanic discourse seep into our writing. We need to make better and more creative use of shifts between text and visual images, photographs, book design and colour. Admittedly many of these possibilities are subject to the politics of publishing, but the implication is that we should become more radically involved in re-shaping those politics.

I nervously wonder, along with many of my colleagues, what all this might do to coherent story-telling, tracing the process of change through time. In the

[45] This is Cohen and Somerville's explanation, in their article on the project: 'Reflections on *Ingelba*', *Westerly*, 2 (June 1991), 45-9. *Ingelba* was published in Sydney 1990.

[46] Klaus Neumann, 'Finding an appropriate beginning for a history of the Tolai colonial past, or: starting from trash', *Canberra Anthropology*, forthcoming 1992, draft, 13.

[47] Ibid., 8-10.

[48] Ashis Nandy, quoted in Prakash, 'Post colonial histories', 404-5.

end the author must use her/his voice and render the past according to her/his lights. An old French proverb proclaims that before speaking one should turn one's tongue seven times: a warning to stop and listen and weigh before utterance. But speak we must in the end. And it is our history that results.

We are a story-telling people. On that I am one with Manning Clark and the readers of the heart, not the straiteners of the soul. However, this does not mean a retreat from tough thinking about how best to convey stories of the human condition as seen from our corner of the cultural landscape. No formula for writing the best history is obvious to me, except this: that history as story-telling is a never ending negotiation between author/producer, informants and audience that remains open-ended while ever we continue to write and read and listen. It is not necessary to subscribe to a unitary conception of history which imposes one, homogeneous voice on a reconstructed (or 'invented'?) past. Multiple conceptions of history are progressive and productive.

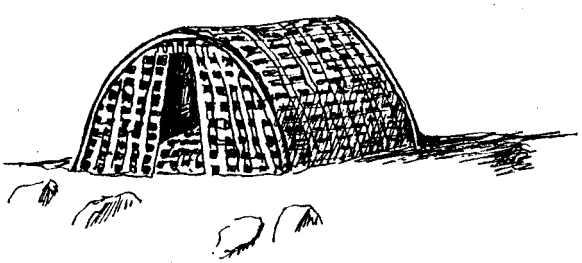
Where does this conversation - some might say flight of fancy - leave my own work situated? Many of the ideas just incompletely enunciated have come from pondering how to write a biography that has nothing to do with the Pacific.[49] But there have been continuing links to Pacific history during the journey. Wrestling with the life of Bishop Burgmann, of Canberra and Goulburn - radical, nationalist, social critic and maverick priest - has meant trying to give voice to a *religious* life that was both intellectually satisfying and emotionally felt as an immensely powerful, personal experience within a community that sustained its own symbols, myths and rituals. I have come to believe that culture is richer, more personal, more problematic in all its forms and symbols than the abstract weight given it in many discussions about the construction of tradition and the objectification or otherwise of culture. That has been a continuing link to Pacific concerns. The cast of thousands involved in a typical biography has also prompted my experiments to convey the multiplicity of voices implicated in the construction of a subject's life.

My personal preference in writing history has been for a continuing emphasis on event-centred, individual lives - the ineluctable inheritance of my gender - while attempting some level of generalising about the human condition in its cultural setting. Pacific history has always enjoyed a strong biographical strain and my present research heads me further in that direction. But I have ploughed a series of untidy furrows, centring on the German contribution to colonial empire and strategies of resistance to colonial

[49] I must also pay tribute to the many discussions with Klaus Neumann and his contributions to conferences which have sparked debate.

rule. These have identified me for the purposes of this workshop with the species 'historian of colonialism'. That work I would judge as belonging to an intermediate generation of theoretical contributions. It lies between the first generation of African and Asian historians who connected colonial protest to categories of nationalist, proto-nationalist, socialist or traditionalist politics, and the later generation of subaltern theorists, who have disconnected the strategies of subordinates from those linear categories. I recognise now that my work is riddled with 'counter insurgent' signs. The rich documentation of the German empire by and large comprises the records of colonialist élites, with their language of dominance largely uncontested in my reconstructions. My writing has grappled with breaking down old imperial categories, and even more modern, but artificial nationalist perspectives to argue for a more heterogeneous evaluation of colonialism. Nonetheless, much of it assumes, as I suspect is true for large areas of Pacific colonial studies, that the patron-client networks of social and political behaviour that appear in the records constitute the politics of the masses; they tend to be so represented in my texts. Field research conducted mainly in the company of élite informants only reinforces the effect.

The Oxford clan's group socialisation encouraged me to maintain a broadly comparative approach, whether across geographically separated German colonies, forms of Pacific protest, interpretations of cargo movements or modes of historiography. My temptation, perfectly expressed in the title of this paper, has always been to gather other peoples' ideas, positions, models, conversations, rather like a bower bird, in order to shine their insights onto colonial Pacific phenomena and to put them into a wider context. It is a kind of post-eclectic, second-hand discourse which has provided me with a voice to contribute to the series of conversations that are going on, but not always meeting, in the crowded room of Pacific history.



SIX

Writing the History of the French Pacific

ROBERT ALDRICH

MANY OF THE PRACTITIONERS of the history of Oceania have been navigating the waters of the Pacific since the beginning of their academic career or professional life, and some have had direct involvement in the region as missionaries, colonial administrators, teachers and advisers or, of course, through their own background as Islanders. To those scholars, and particularly to the pioneers associated with the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, all Pacific historians owe a special debt, especially those of us who are relatively recent voyagers in Oceania. This is my own case. For the past several years, I have been studying the history of the French *territoires d'outre-mer* in the South Pacific - New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna and the French presence in the New Hebrides condominium - but, in fact, this is an interest which I developed only after my study of 'mainland' France.

When I came to Australia in 1981 to take up an appointment at the University of Sydney, where I teach European history in general and French history in particular, my travel agent asked if I would like to make a stopover in Noumea. I admit now, with embarrassment, that I said then, with innocence, that I had never heard of Noumea. Several years of postgraduate study and a newly-minted doctorate in French history had made me vaguely aware of New Caledonia and its history as a penal colony but had not taught me the name of the island's major city. I did not visit Noumea at that time, although subsequently I had the occasion to do so several times, but my first months in Australia did acquaint me with the world of the Pacific Islands through news reports, books and conversations with new friends. Until this time, the Pacific was for me, as for most of my American compatriots, little more than the sun and palm trees pictured in tourist brochures and references in history books to the Pacific theatre of the war in the 1940s and to America's exotic 50th state. My own migration to Australia thus introduced me to Oceania. In 1982 I prepared a conference paper on commercial relations between Australia and France since the 19th century, an effort to combine my

training in French history with the chance to familiarise myself with the history of Australia. I found these links to be significant: France was the second largest purchaser of Australian wool in the 19th century, the bank which became the Banque Nationale de Paris was one of the earliest and largest foreign financial institutions in the Australian colonies, the shipping companies Ballande and the Messageries Maritimes served both Australia and the French Pacific Islands.

Meanwhile I monitored reports of the increasing tensions in New Caledonia and, as political quarrels seemed to threaten civil war or a 'colonial' war there, I proposed to write an article on New Caledonia for *Contemporary French Civilization*. In this journal I had already published an interview with France's most distinguished urban historian, an article on homosexuality in France, and the random book review. My expertise on New Caledonia was nil, but the editors accepted my offer, and I immersed myself in Pacific History. My colleague at the University of Sydney, John Connell, himself an expert on New Caledonia and the South Pacific, provided tutoring, I combed the library for works on the French and the South Pacific, and in 1985 I had the chance to visit New Caledonia for the first time. There seemed a need for a comprehensive study of the French in the Pacific - Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff's fine book, published in 1971,[1] was one of the few overall treatments either in English or in French, and even the monographs available, good though they were, seemed not particularly numerous. Over the next several years, I researched and wrote *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940*, published in 1990, and a sequel, *France and the South Pacific since 1940*, which is now in press. With John Connell, I also edited *France in World Politics* in 1989 and wrote *France's Overseas Frontier: Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer*, published in 1992. Finally, I edited a collection of papers entitled *France, Oceania and Australia: Past and Present*, issued in 1991.[2]

I thus came to the history of the Pacific through a combination of coincidences - my move to Australia - my background in French history, and the observation of the events which tore apart New Caledonia in the 1980s.

[1] Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The French Pacific Islands: French Polynesia and New Caledonia* (Berkeley 1971).

[2] My own writings on the Pacific referred to in these paragraphs are: 'Commercial Relations between France and Australia', in Anne-Marie Nisbet and Maurice Blackman (eds), *The French-Australian Cultural Connection* (Sydney 1984), 71-84; 'New Caledonia: the current crisis in historical perspective', *Contemporary French Civilization*, 10:2 (1986), 175-209; *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940* (London 1990); *France and the South Pacific since 1940* (London in press); (ed.), *France, Oceania and Australia: Past and Present* (Sydney 1991); and, with John Connell (eds), *France in World Politics* (London 1989) and *France's Overseas Frontier: Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer* (Cambridge 1992).

This confluence of circumstances undoubtedly influenced my perceptions of the history of the French territories in Oceania. For example, French institutions and attitudes were far more familiar to me than were the Polynesian and Melanesian cultures of the South Pacific. While I tried to learn about and understand these Island societies, I have maintained that it is necessary to study the history of modern France to understand the history of the French Pacific: the institutions and ideologies which Paris has exported to the Pacific are part and parcel of the political and social structure of the *métropole*. Furthermore, it seemed to me that some of the approaches and ideas that were applicable to the sort of French regional history which I had done in writing a doctoral thesis on the history of Dijon and the Côte-d'Or region of Burgundy - conflict between the state and local authorities, lobbying for economic advantages by various interest groups, the effects of urbanisation, the political and social role of a highly centralised nation-state, the attempts by the central government to homogenise and standardise local societies - were as evident in France's far-flung Pacific 'provinces' as in Burgundy. It also seemed important to me that France's involvement in its Pacific colonies in the 19th century, just as in the present, be viewed as part of an international strategy and placed in the context of France's global activities. Admittedly, my approach to the history of New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna could not entirely be that of the 'island-centred' school of historiography. Rather it connected with the renovated school of the history of European expansion overseas, what used to be called 'colonial history' or 'imperial history'.

My work on the history of the French Pacific Islands has taken place in the general context of two French approaches to the region and to history, which, I hasten to add, is not to minimise the influence Australasian and Pacific historians have had on my research and writing. Indeed, early in my research I rapidly became aware that scholars in Australia and New Zealand had produced some of the most interesting and insightful studies of the French islands.[3]

[3] These include John Connell, *From New Caledonia to Kanaky? The Political History of a French Colony* (Canberra 1987); Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1880* (Honolulu 1980); Bronwen Douglas, 'A History of Culture Contact in North-eastern New Caledonia, 1774-1870', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1972); K.R. Howe, *The Loyalty Islands: A History of Culture Contacts 1840-1900* (Canberra 1977); Colin Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: Change and Survival in French Polynesia, 1767-1945* (Honolulu 1980); Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood* (Melbourne 1967); Alan Ward, *Land and Politics in New Caledonia* (Canberra 1982); and, most recently, Stephen Henningham, *France and the South Pacific: A Contemporary History* (Sydney 1992).

The first of these French scholarly traditions is the study of the Pacific Islands. Since the path-breaking work of Maurice Leenhardt in New Caledonia in the early 20th century and of Jean Guiart at mid-century, French social scientists have been interested in the South Pacific.[4] The number of them has been relatively few, by comparison with French specialists of Africa and Asia - for both scholars and policy-makers the Pacific Islands have been remote, difficult of access and perhaps less urgently attractive than, for example, north Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. But the contributions of French researchers to Pacific studies has been and continues to be impressive. In particular, the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, to which Maurice Leenhardt and Jean Guiart were early contributors when the review was established in the 1940s, has a history of almost 50 years of publication on the Islands. *Etudes Océaniennes*, published in French Polynesia, and the *Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* print articles of interest, and various studies of great value have been published in the French Pacific territories themselves - notable among general works is the superb *Encyclopédie de la Polynésie*. In more recent years, a host of French scholars have published seminal works on the Pacific Islands, many of them on the French territories - José Garanger, Michel Panoff, Alain Saussol, François and Jean-Pierre Doumenge, Alain Babadzan, Claude Robineau, Joël Bonnemaison, Bernard Vienne, Pierre-Yves Toullelan and a number of others.[5] Some of these scholars are well known to their 'Anglo-Saxon' colleagues in Australia and the Pacific, but the French 'school' of Pacific studies has perhaps not received the attention which it deserves. One problem is the lack of translations; not a single book-length study by any of the authors mentioned above, I believe, has yet been translated into English. Many Pacificists read and speak French fluently, but the lack of translations

[4] Leenhardt was the first ethnologist to work in New Caledonia and wrote some of the most important early works on Melanesian social structure and *mentalité*: see, e.g., his *Notes d'ethnologie calédonienne* (Paris 1920), *Gens de la Grande Terre* (Paris 1937) and *Do Kamo: La Personne et le mythe dans le monde mélanésienne* (Paris 1947). Guiart wrote about culture contact in Vanuatu and on Melanesian chieftainship and religion; see, e.g., *Un Siècle et demi de contacts culturels à Tanna, Nouvelles-Hébrides* (Paris 1956), *Religions de l'Océanie* (Paris 1962) and *Structure de la chefferie en Mélanésie du Sud* (Paris 1963). Mention must also be made of Patrick O'Reilly and his invaluable biographical dictionaries, *Calédoniens* (Paris 1953), *Hébridais* (Paris, 1957) and *Tahitiens* (Paris, second edition, 1975).

[5] Among recent works which deserve translation are Alain Babadzan, *Naissance d'une tradition: Changement culturel et syncrétisme religieux aux Iles Australes (Polynésie française)* (Paris 1982); Jean-François Baré, *Le Malentendu pacifique* (Paris 1985) and *Tahiti, les temps et les pouvoirs: Pour une anthropologie historique du Tahiti post-européen* (Paris 1987); Alban Bensa, *Nouvelle-Calédonie: Un Paradis dans la tourmente* (Paris 1990); Joël Bonnemaison, *La Dernière Ile* (Paris 1986); Michel Panoff, *Tahiti métisse* (Paris 1989); Pierre-Yves Toullelan, *Tahiti colonial (1860-1914)* (Paris 1984).

limits distribution and makes it difficult for undergraduate and postgraduate students to become acquainted with the French research on the Pacific. (To be fair, it should be added that the French are not always aware of the work of researchers who write in English.)

If geographers, anthropologists, ethnologists and economists have produced a significant number of works on the Pacific, few French historians have done so. The number of serious French historical works on the South Pacific which have been published is lamentably small; the writings of Pierre-Yves Toullelan and Roselène Dousset-Leenhardt are notable exceptions.[6] Fortunately, there are theses in progress and books in press which will help remedy this dearth of French historical work on the South Pacific, and many of the studies by other social scientists are of great insight and value to the historian even when their methodologies come from different fields.[7]

In fact, interest in the South Pacific increased markedly in the 1980s, almost certainly related to concern with political events there. Such research organisations as ORSTOM (Institut Français de Recherche Scientifique pour le Développement en Coopération) - which has branches in New Caledonia and French Polynesia - carried out important, although sometimes controversial, work on Oceania, and French grant-giving bodies, such as the CNRS (Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique) and several ministries, provided money for scholarly work. There was an impact, as well, on teaching in France: the University of Bordeaux created a chair of Pacific ethnology (first held by Paul De Deckker), the prestigious Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales set up a course on Pacific studies, the government created university centres in Noumea and Papeete, and a number of conferences were organised to bring together specialists on the Pacific.[8]

The second general context for my own approach to the history of the South Pacific has been the renewal of interest in the history of European

[6] See Robert Aldrich, 'The Place of New Caledonia in French Historiography', in M. Spencer, A. Ward and J. Connell (eds), *New Caledonia: Essays in Nationalism and Dependency* (St Lucia, Qld, 1988), 22-37.

[7] One thesis already completed is Elise Huffer, 'La Politique extérieure de Fidji, de Tonga et du Vanuatu: Contribution à l'étude des micro-états océaniens', Université d'Aix-Marseille 1991; others in progress include Isabelle Merle's study of European settlers in late 19th century New Caledonia, Catherine Buttet's economic history of New Caledonia in the late 1800s and Isabelle Cordonnier's and Nathalie Mrgudovic's theses on French policy in the South Pacific. Forthcoming books include Jean Freyss's economic history of New Caledonia and Joël Dauphiné's study of a Melanesian tribe.

[8] Mention should also be made of the spate of books on New Caledonia published during the decade. Most were polemical tracts written by journalists or participants in the political debates of the time. Few have lasting historical value except in so far as they reveal the different opinions and arguments current at the time.

expansion, both in France and elsewhere. Again, alas, most of the French works have gone untranslated despite their interesting analyses of the role of finance and commerce in the French imperial enterprise, the activities of various colonial lobbies, the influence of the anti-colonial movement, and the process of decolonisation. Together works produced over the last decade have amounted to a reassessment of France's colonial history and have also attracted much greater interest to an area of French historical study that was previously relegated, like the colonies themselves, to the sidelines of French life. Several recent publications provide syntheses of the monographic research and testify to the new history of the French overseas possessions, even if the Pacific territories are, in general, given fairly short shrift in such volumes.[9]

The lack of attention to the Pacific Islands in French 'colonial' history can be explained by a preoccupation with the larger colonies in Asia and, in particular, in Africa, and by a general discomfort, even among academics, with France's colonial past. The painful French decolonisation of Indochina and Algeria to some extent discredited the study of the colonies. Academics who returned to France from the former colonies, for better or worse, dominated the field of 'colonial' history until a new generation of historians influenced by more radical ideas of the New Left and *tiers-mondisme* came to the fore in the 1960s. Yet the mainstream of French history continued to focus on historical developments inside France itself using the methodologies and strategies introduced by the now classic *Annales* school of research and writing. The colonies seemed far away and of relatively little interest except to a small band of specialists. By the 1980s, however, some of the more ardent passions connected with the era of colonisation and decolonisation had died, and French writers could begin to write the history of the colonies from a truly post-colonial perspective. Not coincidentally, the reorganisation of the French colonial archives, now superbly housed in Aix-en-Provence, encouraged further study.[10]

The work of the French and foreign scholars has provided several important caveats about French overseas expansion. Most historians now accept that colonialism was far from a monolithic and unitary phenomenon but was rather a series of developments, largely unplanned and sometimes random, which came together at various periods and in different places: there was no grand imperial plan. Moreover, the majority of French leaders, and the general public, were less concerned with the empire than they were with more

[9] Jean Meyer, et al., *Histoire de la France coloniale des origines à 1914* (Paris 1991) and Jacques Thobie, et al., *Histoire de la France coloniale, 1914-1990* (Paris 1990).

[10] Robert Aldrich, 'A note on the renewal of Colonial Studies in France', *Contemporary French Civilization*, 12:2 (1988), 263-68.

pressing issues such as political and constitutional strife, industrial growth, social discontent and diplomacy inside Europe. The French empire was created largely by a group of committed and vocal colonialists who ceaselessly campaigned for the *outre-mer* and tried to convince French law-makers and investors of the value of empire. Yet, recent works have pointed out, French business was only marginally interested in the colonies, as it found greater prospects for markets and raw materials elsewhere; the economic imperatives of imperialism, even the 'economic taproots', are rather hard to justify in the case of French expansion, particularly in the South Pacific. This research has made colonialism into a rather more complex and more fragmented process than perhaps once thought - either by colonialists or anti-colonialists - but it has also made it possible to see the colonies as mirrors of the history of the *métropole* as well as territories endowed with their own particular historical dynamics; sorting out the links between colonies and *métropoles* provides a continued justification for 'colonial' history.[11]

As the cliché goes, however, much work remains to be done on the French colonies, including the ones in Oceania, before historians have a full view of their history. For instance, enterprising postgraduate students or scholars could embark on histories of the Marquesas, the Loyalties or other island groups in the 20th century, which has received less attention than the 19th century. We need studies of particular social groups, such as settlers. There are still few works on specific institutions in the territories, such as the press, political parties or particular businesses. A study of the history of education in the islands would be valuable and very interesting, as would an analysis of the role of women - both immigrant and Islander women - in the French territories. An environmental or ecological history of the French territories remains to be written. Much could be done on social structures - more often treated from the viewpoint of the ethnologist or the anthropologist than the perspective of the historian. And those with skills in semiotics and deconstruction of texts could look more closely at the writings of missionaries or admirals.

For present and future researchers, happily, the sources are numerous. The archives in Aix include literally hundreds of boxes of primary materials on the colonies, files which I myself could use only very selectively and somewhat arbitrarily. The archives in Noumea and in Papeete (newly housed and organised in the case of the archives in Tahiti) hold most interesting collections. There are also primary documents of value in such locations as the archives of the French Navy (a surprisingly underutilised although very rich source), those of the French Foreign Ministry and those of such groups

[11] See D.K. Fieldhouse, 'Can Humpty-Dumpty be put together again? Imperial History in the 1980s', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12 (1984), 9-23.

as the Crédit Lyonnais bank (which maintains a business archives), the Protestant mission society and Catholic religious orders and the Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer. The colonial and national archives of Britain, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and the United States contain much material, although I did not explore these sources in my own research.

Transforming primary documents into published history presents the problems of which all researchers are well aware. Travel funds and time to do research are unfortunately often in short supply. Archival work is a long and arduous type of research. Documents are sometimes missing or misfiled. In the case of the French archives, in theory, archives for a 30-year period preceding the present are unavailable without special authorisation. In practice, the available documents may 'peter out' before the official end of that period - in researching the history of the French Pacific since 1940, I found very few useful archival documents for the years after the early to mid-1950s. Certain documents for the earlier period are still classified; for instance, I was disappointed not to be able to consult a document outlining the plans of the Vichy Government (during the Second World War) for France's Oceanic outposts. Some archives are completely lost; the records of the French shipping house, Ballande, the company claims, were all destroyed during the war. As the years pass, more sources will come to light and classified documents will be released, but it will undoubtedly be some time before Pacific historians can use archival records to research such delicate subjects as nuclear testing in French Polynesia or the 'events' of the 1980s in New Caledonia.

These are some of the practical considerations involved in writing the history of the French Pacific Islands; most of them do not differ significantly from those faced by historians of other islands. But what is particular, or even unique, to the history of the French territories by comparison with others in the South Pacific? First of all, and quite simply, is the importance of 'French' in 'French Pacific'. Since France's takeover of its islands in the South Pacific, they have been modelled in the French image - the language, institutions and, to a degree, even attitudes which were introduced into the islands have been those of France. This has certainly created a gap between the French islands and those colonised by Britain, Germany, the United States or Australia. The particularities of the French system are often unfamiliar to outsiders and have led to certain misunderstandings about institutions in New Caledonia, Tahiti, Wallis and Futuna and France itself. During the tense days of the 1980s, I noticed with regularity errors about French institutions, political parties, individuals and history (not to mention errors in French language) made by casual commentators and some journalists. I dare to say that a degree of this misunderstanding verged on the intentional; the French point of view on the

South Pacific was seldom put forward and not often appreciated in various parts of the South Pacific and Australasia.

Several examples of particularities in the French system, which have been transported to France's overseas *départements* and territories, illustrate the point that the French islands, because of their colonial heritage, are indeed different from others in the region. One case is that of French centralisation, a feature of both French colonial history and the history of the *métropole*, and something which characterised the *ancien régime* and has continued to mark France under every government since the Revolution. Successive governments have conceived of France as a unitary state in which law codes, systems of education and political institutions are nationwide, not local or regional - this is exemplified by a well-known comment by one French Minister of Education in the 1930s who said he could look at his watch and say precisely what every pupil in a particular year of school was doing at that exact time. In short, France, unlike such countries as the United States or Australia, is not a federation of somewhat autonomous states; French governments after 1789 tried to combat local variations and deviations from the national norm and used the ideology of nationalism and such institutions as the primary school and military service to enforce national standards. Centralisation extended to social, cultural and economic policy as well as political life.

The effects on the 'colonies' were extremely significant. Unlike the British, the French had little notion of 'responsible government' or 'self-government' even for such settler colonies as Algeria or New Caledonia. Local governments in France enjoyed very few real powers of decision-making. Just as Prefects represented the central government and controlled the reins of authority in the French mainland *départements*, so Governors or High Commissioners ruled the colonies; where they existed, elected bodies were only privy councils of the Governor or consultative assemblies. This system was perpetuated, in transmuted form, with the constitutions of the Fourth Republic in 1946 and of the Fifth Republic in 1958. The colonies were transformed into *départements et territoires d'outre-mer* or, less commonly, into associated states, but Paris retained political power.

In the French view, however, this was not necessarily undemocratic. French residents of such *territoires d'outre-mer* as the Pacific possessions became fully fledged French citizens with all of the legal rights of their compatriots (at least in principle), the right of abode in France and the right to vote in all elections. Furthermore, they were given representation in the French parliament, the right to elect one or more *députés* and senators. This level of representation, which was extended to Polynesians and, albeit tardily, to Melanesians in New Caledonia as well, was unprecedented in the colonial Pacific; in the 1950s France was indisputably in advance of other colonial powers in Oceania in granting full citizenship and parliamentary rights to the

islanders under its control. Afterwards, of course, other islands moved more speedily towards independence, while the French islands evolved more slowly. French policy-makers, in fact, have seen these rights of citizenship, legal equality and parliamentary representation as alternatives to sovereignty. The legitimacy of that claim may be debated, but it is a view justified by French constitutional provisions and political practice. This partly explains the strength of reaction against dissidents who do not accept the view, from Pouvanaa a Oopaa in French Polynesia in the 1950s to the FLNKS (Front de Libération Nationale Kanake et Socialiste) in New Caledonia in the 1980s. Even in the last few years, some French politicians - such as, à propos of New Caledonia, Michel Rocard - have not seen 'decolonisation' necessarily to mean 'independence'. This approach is markedly different from that of Britain or Australia (although it has much in common with the American view of statehood and commonwealth status).

A second particularity of France and the French territories is an emphasis on legalism and planning, which has been ascribed (rather simplistically) to the heritage of Cartesian logic. New Caledonia has been a fine example, as almost every change of government has produced a new set of statutes or programmes for the territory: the Pisani plan, the Fabius plan, the Pons plan, the Rocard plan just in the 1980s. The same has been true with French Polynesia and the revised statutes of 1977, 1984 and 1990. More comprehensive laws for the French *outre-mer* have been drawn up as well - the constitutions of 1946 and 1958 and the *loi-cadre* Defferre in 1956. It is important that the French see change to be effected primarily by the evolution of statutes, and the possibilities for change are thus defined or circumscribed by codes of laws. The question of independence or lack of it is referred to as a constitutional issue. For instance, Edgard Pisani resurrected an all but forgotten clause of the 1958 constitution for his 'independence-in-association' plan for New Caledonia, although anti-independence 'loyalists' claimed that the French president was betraying his constitutional obligation to safeguard the territorial integrity of the Republic in considering independence for New Caledonia or in restricting the electorate in the territory. Law, in theory and in practice, and even when it is bent to suit the needs of the state, remains central in France, and the institutions in which laws are discussed and through which they can be challenged are numerous - not only the parliament and the courts but the Conseil Constitutionnel and the Conseil d'Etat play a role in the interpretation and execution of laws.

Furthermore, it has often seemed in the case of the Pacific that certain French policy-makers have believed that it is possible to legislate away all problems: what is needed is the perfect statute in order for economic, social and even cultural conflicts to be resolved. This implies, as well, that law can and is moulded to implement the demands of the state and the politicians who

control it. The variations in French policy in the Pacific in the last few decades, and even earlier, have all been justified by reference to legal terms and arguments; they have all been technically constitutional, yet they have aimed at radically different solutions to the problems besetting the islands. This is not unique to France, of course, but in the French system the attention given to law codes, the possibility for governments to alter them to meet political demands, and the frequency with which they are redesigned are perhaps greater than in some other systems. Initiatives for dramatic change, and the execution of new policies, more often come from the top than the bottom, more often from the powers-that-be than from a groundswell of public opinion - despite the legacy of the Revolution.

Yet another trait of France and the French *outre-mer*, linked with political centralisation, is the economic role of the state. Until the last few years, when economic liberalism has become fashionable in France, the French state has always taken an outsized role in economic development. In the 1940s and 1950s, French policy-makers championed their degree of central planning (*planification*) and the part the state played in directing the economy (the policy of *dirigisme*). The state, in short, was seen to be the prime mover of the economy and exercised great powers, by comparison with such 'free-market' economies as the United States, to regulate the economy. Therefore it was (and still is) no surprise to many in France and the French territories that the economies of the French Pacific Islands are so dependent on subsidies from Paris. Critics, with a certain legitimacy, have charged that the economy of French Polynesia is 'artificial' and have pointed out that the economic health of nickel-rich New Caledonia is propped up by French money and that Wallis and Futuna is a case of 'total dependency'. Yet from a French perspective this is worrisome rather than outrageous. As various defenders of French policy have provocatively pointed out, no one asks how much Corsica or the Massif Central costs France or whether France makes a profit from Brittany. The level of government expenditure in the Pacific Islands, for many in France, is justified by the need for 'solidarity' - a word beloved by the Socialists - with France's overseas citizens but also by the obligation of France to pay the cost to keep its flag flying around the world. From the standpoint of at least some of the Islanders, the willingness of France to pump money into the territories, and thus maintain their high standards of living, is a benefit not shared by the independent micro-states of the region. The enormous role of the French state as investor, financier, employer and economic regulator has come under attack by conservatives, and is being reassessed by the Socialists, but the level of involvement of the French state in its far-flung territories is not likely to change substantially or rapidly.

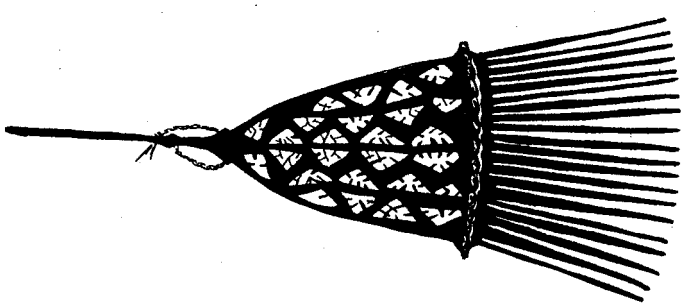
A final example of the special traits which characterise the French Pacific is France's refusal to see itself hemmed in by its hexagonal European

boundaries or to relinquish its role as an international power. With a measure of both justification and self-justification, France has always seen itself as having a global presence: from the empire of Charlemagne through the Crusades, from the first overseas empire of New France and the Antilles in the 1500s to the 'age of imperialism' in Africa and Asia in the late 1800s, France has always acted on a global stage. Even since 'decolonisation', this policy has not changed. France has maintained close relations with its former colonies through aid, trade, political links, cultural exchange and, sometimes, through political intervention. France has used the idea of 'Francophonie' not only to preserve and defend French language and culture but to safeguard its influence worldwide. More precisely, France has retained sovereignty over its 10 *départements et territoires d'outre-mer*,[12] including the Pacific territories, which are bases for French action around the world. These are considered integral parts of the French Republic, and at least some politicians vaunt the economic, strategic and cultural benefits which accrue to France from what have been termed the 'confetti of empire'. There is debate on how real such benefits are, but it is crucial that both critics and defenders of French policy accept that the very existence of French sovereignty in its *départements et territoires d'outre-mer* is part of France's claim to status as a middle-range international power. In this view, the future of France cannot be divorced from the future of these islands, even if the future should lead to independence for them.

In conclusion, there are various traits which make the French Pacific territories different from other islands of Oceania. Many of these relate to the particular characteristics of the French political and economic system and of French ideology. These characteristics were imposed on New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna in an especially forceful way. More than any other colonial power, France hoped to remould its conquered possessions; these little Frances would add to the glory of 'la plus grande France', as colonialists sometimes referred to the empire, and would become civilised in the process. The hope of that achievement was ethnocentric and the powers which sought to achieve it were flawed. But, somewhat ironically, France has remained in Oceania when several other colonial policies have departed, and France shows little sign of leaving. The French *territoires d'outre-mer* of Oceania excite political passions for that very reason, but for the scholar they are also particularly interesting because of the very direct links they have with a European country, all the while being genuinely Pacific

[12] In addition to the ones in the South Pacific, these are Saint-Pierre et Miquelon off the coast of Canada, Martinique and Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, French Guiana in South America, Réunion and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean and the French Austral and Antarctic territories.

cultures. Therefore, understanding the history of these islands means studying both the history of the South Pacific and the history of France; the comparisons between those histories, and the ways in which they intersect in the French *territoires d'outre-mer*, provide the special fascination offered by study of the French Pacific.



SEVEN

Doing Ethnographic History: Reflections on Practices and Practising*

BRONWEN DOUGLAS

SOME YEARS AGO I wrote about ethnography and ethnographic history in a short paper framed as a review article on Marshall Sahlins's *Historical Metaphors* and Alban Bensa's ethnography of a linguistic zone in New Caledonia in *Les chemins de l'alliance*, both written by anthropologists and both, in different ways, explicitly historical.[1]

The paper marked a phase in an ongoing personal journey from unreflective empiricism to reflexive pluralism, empirically-based, as histories and ethnographies surely must be, but theoretically informed in an eclectic way, concerned to explore cultural, strategic and political dimensions of discourse production, survival and reading. The journey was triggered by initially reluctant engagements with anthropology and early on was punctuated by instructive bouts of theoretical bandwaggoning. The paper charted an emergent synergy between history and anthropology: history-wise, it referred to Greg Dening and my colleagues Rhys Isaac and June Philipp; anthropologically, it moved from Clifford Geertz, who was their major inspiration, to consider historical dimensions in the works of several of the anthropologists who had to that stage most inspired me, Victor Turner, Sahlins, Maurice Leenhardt and Bensa. The present paper takes up both strands of that story: personal encounters in contexts of continued fraying at

* The original version of this paper was written while I was a Visiting Fellow in the Comparative Austronesian Project, Anthropology (Research School of Pacific Studies), Australian National University. I am grateful to Jim Fox for the opportunity thus provided.

[1] Bronwen Douglas, 'Ethnography and ethnographic history: some recent trends', *Journal of Pacific History Bibliography and Comment*, 19 (1984), 36-42; Alban Bensa and Jean-Claude Rivierre, *Les chemins de l'alliance. L'organisation sociale et ses représentations en Nouvelle-Calédonie (région de Touho - aire linguistique cémuhî)* (Paris 1982); Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (Ann Arbor 1981).

the disciplinary borders of history and anthropology, with complex, creative intertexture of threads thus released and threads from elsewhere, notably critical theory.

I shy from the notion of 'ethnographic history' as a 'sub-speciality' of a 'speciality' in a 'discipline' if such a nesting set is made to imply exclusive pigeon-holes and arbitrary bounds to knowing and doing; from there it is an easy step to ontological imperialism, the carve-up of objectified knowledge, conceived as finite and real, insistence on rigid standards, conceived as moral and proper, and deployment of considerable effort to police the inmates and patrol the borders. I do not object to the idea of 'disciplines' if it means exploration and celebration of various ways of looking at and doing things, rather than attempted imposition of conformity, and if it at least tolerates those who inhabit the liminal zones between disciplines, those passengers (in the sense of 'passing through') in Turner's 'realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise'. Liminal persons, he warned, are often regarded as dangerous by those ensconced in the high ground of established structures, 'since they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere . . . , and are at the very least "betwixt and between" all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification'.[2] It is with the pure possibilities of ethnographic histories that I deal here, leaving their imagined dangers and transgressions to anyone who might think they matter.

MY first encounters with professional history were at Adelaide University, in what was then thought one of the best History departments around. Yet I lack formal training in the discipline and craft of history, since an accident of sabbatical timing made me miss Hugh Stretton's fourth-year 'Historiography' - by all accounts a formative intellectual experience, but the only reflective element in the Adelaide honours degree at the time. After years of embarrassed amnesia, I find I can live with the textual vestiges of that once-upon-a-time young person, because she was always uneasy about causal questions, with which I remain uncomfortable, and because she not only read R.G. Collingwood's *Idea of History*, but underlined passages that are still keynotes of my philosophy and method: on the autonomous, self-authorising nature of historical thought; on imaginative construction as the touchstone of historical judgement; on the subjectivity and present embeddedness of historians and history; on the reflexivity of all historical thinking (thought

[2] Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca 1967), 97; 'Dewey, Dilthey, and drama: an essay in the anthropology of experience', in Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (eds), *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana and Chicago 1986), 41-2.

about thought); on the necessary assumption of intentionality in past actors' acts if they are to be accessible to historical thinking.[3]

My first encounters with anthropology consisted of milking ethnographies for information on the 'traditional society' of 'my' islanders - the Kanak of New Caledonia. This was an exercise in essentialism and anachronism typical of an Australian National University doctoral student in Pacific history. During the 1970s the History Department at La Trobe University was abuzz with ideas and vigorous critical debate about theories and methods of doing history, often appropriated from anthropology. I listened a lot, understood some and knew that I too was irked by the common-sense rationalism with which many historians reduced others to universal next-door neighbours. I began to learn the languages of anthropological discourse, though put off, like some anthropologists, by the faceless, timeless tyranny of reified systems and the ethnographic present. Models seemed called for, to advance systematic analysis and comparison, but for an historian they had to be dynamic and privilege actors and actions at least as much as structures. An experimental phase followed during which, although I never forgot that my principal objects of study were the sparse residues of past actions randomly inscribed in contemporary texts, I was insidiously tempted by the comforting authority and compelling logic of anthropological systems to place the conceptual cart before the actual horse.[4] But contemporary texts, no less contrived and far more unruly than one's own field notes, rarely lend themselves to the systematic artifice of conventional anthropological discourse. A more modest - if more rigorous and laborious - strategy seemed called for: to explore contemporary action descriptions for hints of pattern, to bracket patterns discerned with the richer sociology provided in some ethnographies, to locate all texts, including one's own, in temporal and discursive contexts.[5]

TURNING to the 'state of the art' in ethnographic history, an uncomfortable task because it involves pigeon-holing and labelling in terms which victims might find inappropriate, I apologise in advance for misconstruals and

[3] R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford 1961), 236, 244-5, 247-8, 289, 306-7, 310.

[4] Bronwen Douglas, '"Written on the ground": spatial symbolism, cultural categories and historical process in New Caledonia', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 91 (1982), 383-415; idem, 'Ritual and politics in the inaugural meeting of high chiefs from New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands', *Social Analysis*, 18 (1985), 60-84.

[5] Following Guest, I use 'discourse' to mean a lexicon deployed systemically 'to privilege certain aspects of the issue being addressed or articulated, and to exclude or silence others, in ways that are distinctive, or constitutive, of particular cultural collectivities at specific historical moments'. Harriet Guest, 'The great distinction: figures of the exotic in the work of William Hodges', *Oxford Art Journal*, 12 (1989), 55.

omissions: the latter include Micronesia, on which I am lamentably ill-informed, and oral history, which I do not do. Recently the term 'ethnographic history' has been particularly identified with a group of scholars at La Trobe and Melbourne Universities,[6] the best known of whom are Inga Clendinnen, Dening and Isaac.[7] It is kin to disparate strands in modern social history, which have in common action- and text-orientation, reflexivity and conceptual rigour informed by a range of theoretical perspectives, mostly derived from anthropology and critical theory. Its closest relatives are variant - and by no means mutually friendly - versions of the 'new (particularly French) cultural history', especially those of Robert Darnton, Natalie Davis and Roger Chartier. There are echoes of the Edward Thompson-inspired focus on popular culture in modern British history.[8] Theoretically more distant, but highly apposite to the Pacific because of its concern with colonialism and nationalism, is the South Asian 'subaltern studies' school, founded by Ranajit

[6] Dubbed the 'Melbourne Group' by Clifford Geertz, 'History and anthropology', *New Literary History*, 21 (1990), 325-9. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie apparently once taught a course on 'Ethnographic History' at the Collège de France, but I have little common ground with his essentialist, non-reflexive historical practice. Renato Rosaldo, 'From the door of his tent: the fieldworker and the inquisitor', in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley 1986), 77-87; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294-1324*, tr. Barbara Bray (London 1978).

[7] Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests. Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570* (Cambridge 1987); idem, *Aztecs: an Interpretation* (Cambridge 1991); Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches. Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880* (Melbourne 1980); idem, *The Bounty: an Ethnographic History* (Melbourne 1988); idem, *History's Anthropology: the Death of William Gooch* (Lanham 1988); idem, 'A poetic for histories: transformations that present the past', in Aletta Biersack (ed.), *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology* (Washington, D.C. 1991), 347-80; Marie Hanson Fels, *Good Men and True: the Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District, 1837-1853* (Melbourne 1988); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill 1982); Donna Merwick, *Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: the Dutch and English Experiences* (Cambridge 1990); June Philipp, 'Traditional historical narrative and action-oriented (or ethnographic) history', *Historical Studies*, 20 (1983), 339-52; idem, *A Poor Man's Diggings: Mining and Community at Bethanga, Victoria, 1875-1912* (Melbourne 1987).

[8] Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, tr. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton 1987); idem, *Cultural History: between Practices and Representations*, tr. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge 1988); Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York 1984); idem, 'The symbolic element in history', *Journal of Modern History*, 58 (1986), 218-34; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Cambridge 1987 [1965]); idem, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass. 1983); idem, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford 1987); Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley 1989); see also Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy. Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge 1987).

Guha, who strategically subverted Marxist, humanist and postmodernist perspectives to their own agenda.[9]

Pacific specialists in the La Trobe/Melbourne group include Dening, Pat Grimshaw, Ron Adams and myself;[10] our major theoretical inspirations are from anthropology and in Grimshaw's case feminism, but we are not clones. Anthropologically informed Pacific history has a longer tradition in New Zealand than elsewhere, product, perhaps, of Maori embeddedness in liberal *pakeha* consciousness and a marvellous vernacular archive: e.g., J.C. Beaglehole, Judith Binney, John Owens, Ann Parsonson and, from the other direction, Anne Salmond. Nicholas Thomas, like Dening, straddles history and anthropology in having formal training in both disciplines. Thomas's interests are catholic. His major published histories are oriented to practices, events and meanings-in-action and focused on reconstructing the internal dynamics of indigenous society and culture before and after contacts with Europeans.[11] Dening is concerned to understand and render the mutual poetics, theatrics and caricatures of encounters, across beaches between cultures and across disciplinary boundaries. Overlapping with the reciprocal, much more numerous movement of anthropologists into history, the theoretically and methodologically fertile field of gender studies has obvious affinities with 'ethnographic history' as I conceive it: the work of Pat Grimshaw, Margaret Jolly, Jocelyn Linnekin, Martha Macintyre and Caroline Ralston comes to mind, though none limits her interests to gender.[12]

[9] E.g., Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford 1988). South Asianist anthropology has long had strong historical leanings, e.g., André Béteille, *Caste, Class, and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (Berkeley 1965); Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi 1987); Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: an Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization* (Delhi 1972).

[10] Ron Adams, *In the Land of Strangers: a Century of European Contact with Tanna, 1774-1874* (Canberra 1984); Bronwen Douglas, '"Almost constantly at war"? An ethnographic perspective on fighting in New Caledonia', *Journal of Pacific History*, 25 (1990), 22-46; idem, 'Winning and losing? Reflections on the war of 1878-79 in New Caledonia', *Journal of Pacific History*, 26 (1991), 213-33; idem, 'Doing ethnographic history: the case of fighting in New Caledonia', in James G. Carrier (ed.), *History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1992), 86-115; Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawaii* (Honolulu 1989).

[11] Nicholas Thomas, *Planets around the Sun: Dynamics and Contradictions of the Fijian* matanitu (Sydney 1986); idem, *Marquesan Societies: Inequality and Political Transformation in Eastern Polynesia* (Oxford 1990).

[12] See especially Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Cambridge 1989); Caroline Ralston and Nicholas Thomas (eds), *Sanctity and Power: Gender in Polynesian History*, special issue *Journal of Pacific History*, 22:3-4 (1987). On general questions of relationships between gender, race, class and colonialism as discursive constructs and lived experience, see G. Bottomley, Marie de Lepervanche and Jeannie Martin, *Intersexions: Gender/Class/Culture/*

Explicitly historical anthropology is harder to classify, since everyone seems to be doing it now, or pretending to.[13] Douglas Oliver tackled it earlier than most and wrote outstanding historical ethnography; his history in *Ancient Tahitian Society* might be categorised as an anthropologically-literate 'island-centred' variety.[14] More recently historical anthropology, particularly of Polynesia, has been dominated by Marshall Sahlins, whose disciples include Antony Hooper, Judith Huntsman and Valerio Valeri.[15] As is well known, he proposed a dialectical resolution to the hoary antinomy of structure and action: not only did culture reproduce itself, but in the 'structure of the conjuncture' of culture and action, contextual values might force redefinition of conventional values, thereby transforming the cultural structure itself. Other historically-oriented anthropologists of Polynesia include Jocelyn Linnekin, who worked with Sahlins and displays a flair, of which any historian might be proud, for asking creative questions of old texts. Robert Borofsky wrote the history and ethnography of his knowing the creative practical dynamics of local historical knowing on Pukapuka and contrasted both with the rule clad, synchronic knowledge constructed by earlier ethnographic model-builders.[16] Historical anthropologists of Melanesian and Papua New Guinean societies include a somewhat neglected earlier generation - notably Peter Lawrence and Richard Salisbury - and an increasingly mainstream recent one: Aletta Biersack (who also works on Tonga), Achsah

Ethnicity (Sydney 1991); Micaela di Leonardo, *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era* (Berkeley 1991); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London 1988); Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago 1990).

[13] For excellent examples of historical anthropology beyond the Pacific, see Cohn, *An Anthropologist*; Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power. Spirit of Resistance* (Chicago 1985); Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol.1 (Chicago and London 1991); Renato Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting 1883-1974: a Study in Society and History* (Stanford 1980).

[14] Douglas L. Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, 3 vols (Canberra 1974).

[15] Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors*; idem, *Islands of History* (Chicago 1985); idem, 'The return of the event, again; with reflections on the beginnings of the great Fijian war of 1843 to 1855 between the kingdoms of Bau and Rewa', in Biersack (ed.), *Clio*, 37-99; Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman (eds), *Transformations of Polynesian Culture* (Auckland 1985); Valerio Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice. Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii*, tr. Paula Wissing (Chicago 1985); idem, 'The transformation of a transformation: a structural essay on an aspect of Hawaiian history (1809-1819)', *Social Analysis*, 10 (1982), 3-41. For a critique of anthropologists' - particularly Sahlins's - attempts to marry structure and action within an historical framework see Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time: History and Evolution in Anthropological Discourse* (Cambridge 1989), 102-22.

[16] Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor 1990); idem, 'Inside, outside: a Hawaiian community in the world-system', in Biersack (ed.), *Clio*, 165-203; Robert Borofsky, *Making History: Pukapukan and Anthropological Constructions of Knowledge* (Cambridge 1987).

and James Carrier, Deborah Gewertz, Margaret Jolly, Roger Keesing, Martha Macintyre, Edward Schieffelin, Robert Tonkinson, Michael Young, and many others![17] As in Africa and elsewhere, the challenge to understand religious movements long ago inspired explicitly historical perspectives, which in Melanesia often linked cults to an internal dynamic in pre-contact societies: e.g., Kenelm Burridge, Lawrence, Salisbury, Michele Stephen.[18] Pacific historians and anthropologists have scarcely begun to explore the implications of 'postmodernist' scepticism, though Klaus Neumann has experimented with montage and a decentred, multivocal strategy which tries to share authorial authority with other, indigenous voices.[19]

I TURN now to reflections on practising ethnographic history. One of Dening's many contributions to this discourse was his insight that neither history - thinking about and describing the past - nor ethnography - thinking about

[17] E.g, Aletta Biersack, 'Histories in the making: Paiela and historical anthropology', *History and Anthropology*, 5 (1990), 63-85; Achsah H. Carrier and James G. Carrier, *Structure and Process in a Melanesian Society: Ponam's Progress in the Twentieth Century* (London 1991); Deborah B. Gewertz, *Sepik River Societies: a Historical Ethnography of the Chambri and their Neighbors* (New Haven 1983); Deborah Gewertz and Edward Schieffelin (eds), *History and Ethnohistory in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney 1985); Margaret Jolly, '"To save the girls for brighter and better lives": Presbyterian missions and women in the south of Vanuatu', *Journal of Pacific History*, 26 (1991), 27-48; Roger M. Keesing and Peter Corris, *Lightning Meets the West Wind: the Malaita Massacre* (Melbourne 1980); Peter Lawrence, *Road Belong Cargo: a Study of the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District New Guinea* (Melbourne 1964); Richard F. Salisbury, *From Stone to Steel: Economic Consequences of a Technological Change in New Guinea* (Melbourne 1962); idem, *Vunamami: Economic Transformation in a Traditional Society* (Melbourne 1970); Edward L. Schieffelin and Robert Crittenden, *Like People You See in a Dream: First Contact in Six Papuan Societies* (Stanford 1991); Robert Tonkinson, 'Church and *Kastom* in southeast Ambrym', in Michael Allen (ed.), *Vanuatu: Politics, Economics and Ritual in Island Melanesia* (Sydney 1981); Michael W. Young, 'Doctor Bromilow and the Bwaidoka wars', *Journal of Pacific History*, 12 (1977), 130-53; Michael W. Young (convenor), *The History and Anthropology of the Massim, Papua New Guinea*, special issue, *Journal of Pacific History*, 18:1-2 (1983).

[18] Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: a Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford 1971); Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (Fairlawn, N.J. 1957); Johannes Fabian, 'The anthropology of religious movements: from explanation to interpretation', in Johannes Fabian (ed.), *Beyond Charisma: Religious Movements as Discourse*, special issue, *Social Research*, 46 (1979), 4-35; James W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: an Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa* (Princeton 1982); Lawrence, *Road Belong Cargo*; Richard F. Salisbury, 'An "indigenous" New Guinea cult', *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, 18 (1958), 67-78; Michele Stephen, *Cargo Cult Hysteria: Symptom of Despair or Technique of Ecstasy*; Research Centre for Southwest Pacific Studies, La Trobe University, Occasional Paper 1 (Melbourne 1977); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London 1971).

[19] Klaus Neumann, *Not the Way it Really Was: Constructing the Tolai Past* (Honolulu 1992); see also James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass. 1988), 41-54.

and describing others - is an exclusive academic preserve, that both are innate human dispositions and activities, conceived and done in conventional, contested ways that may vary between eras and within and between cultures.[20] Historians and ethnographers participate in such conventions while reciprocally engaged in the mystifying professional conventions of their respective disciplines. One manifestation of the interpenetration of the quotidian and the professional in history is the profound modernist commitment to what Roland Barthes called the 'reality effect' - the implicit notion of an objective, external past reality as an irreducible factual bedrock - which informs most conventional history-making, popular and academic alike.[21] When we 'do history', experientially or professionally, we have recourse to criteria of accuracy and plausibility which refer to an image of what the past was really like. The believed-in real past is, of course, our own present mental image, constructed and constantly reconstructed as we experience, read, think and write: this is what Collingwood meant by 'the historical imagination as a self-dependent, self-determining, and self-justifying form of thought'.[22] The past itself is a 'dead thing' knowable only through its 'present sign[s]',[23] the relics, the debris in which its traces are inscribed, the words, written or spoken, memories, objects, images and landscapes which comprise our texts. 'Histories' come from our creative engagement with such relics, which are neither the past itself nor a neutral, finite body of inert objects, to be neatly slotted together to reveal the jigsaw puzzle past as it really was; like field notes, ethnographies and histories oral and written, relics were produced in a present by engaged human beings. History, therefore, is a present linguistic act, a nominative process, other people's and our own, then, since and now, requiring strict attention to the ways they and we mobilised metaphors to label and categorise.

Every historian, of course, places his or her signature on a categorisation process. Evidently, it is best done reflexively, with critical attention to the texts

[20] Dening, 'A poetic for histories'; Borofsky, *Making History*; Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting*; Roy Wagner, 'New Ireland is shaped like a rifle and we are at the trigger: the power of digestion in cultural reproduction', in Biersack (ed.), *Clio*, 329-46.

[21] Roland Barthes, 'Historical discourse', in Michael Lane (ed.), *Structuralism: a Reader* (London 1970), 154. Histories, like 'cultures' and 'traditions', are present, reflexive, dialectical and compelling; to paraphrase a paraphrase by Bruner, people (including historians) not only construct their pasts but watch themselves do it and then enter and believe in the pasts they have made. Edward M. Bruner, 'Experience and its expressions', in Turner and Bruner (eds), *Anthropology of Experience*, 25.

[22] Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 249.

[23] Barthes, 'Historical discourse', 155. 'The historical imagination . . . [has] as its special task to imagine the past: not an object of possible perception, since it does not now exist, but able through this activity to become an object of our thought'. Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 242.

used and the settings, as well as to one's personal investment in their selection and in framing questions to and about them. Language use is both inevitable to convey meanings and inevitably reduces the complexities of lived experience to schema and caricature. Pierre Bourdieu, for instance, noted that 'science [here including history] has a time which is not that of practice. . . . it tends to ignore time and, in doing so, to reify [, detemporalize and totalize] practices'.[24] All language distorts, but some distortions are more distorting than others. I like my metaphors to be as congruent as possible with protagonists' metonyms. To this end I prefer plurals and active categories - verbs, gerunds and continuous tenses - to discrete institutions, abstract substantives and the passive voice: 'fighting' to 'war', 'power' and 'authority' to 'politics', 'exchanges' to 'economics', 'rituals' to 'religion', 'actions' to 'practice', 'knowing' to 'knowledge'. These are discursive choices which embody my understanding of key holistic orientations in Kanak cultures and social experience: indeed, I suspect, in human experience generally, but this is obscured by the rigid boundary-marking and dichotomous logic of objectivist classifications, which can scarcely conceive of homologies and relations of transformation between seemingly discrete domains.[25] By contrast, I am attracted to reciprocities and mediation rather than to hierarchies and opposition. None of this is merely academic or cosmetic: e.g., I argue that in early encounters between Islanders and missionaries in New Caledonia, Melanesians' existential and instrumental experience of 'religion' as lived rituals encouraged eclectic sampling and appropriation of foreign ideas and objects, which they transformed to suit their own interests and cultural logic (thereby, *qua* Sahlins, presumably laying the ground for cultural transformation in terms of that logic). At this stage they did not encounter Christianity/civilisation systemically, as antithetical to their own objectified religion/culture, unlike missionaries, who usually saw opposition and hostility to them and their rituals in just such terms, phrased in Manichæan metaphors.

'Ethnographic history' is a useful label for an epistemology and a method, a knowing and doing. Its key, interrelated elements are four-fold: conceptual

[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, tr. Richard Nice (Cambridge 1977), 9; see also Barthes on the 'friction between two time-scales - history's and the history book's': 'the historian's function is a predictive one: it is because he knows what has not yet been related that the historian, like the myth-bearer, needs a two-layered Time, braiding the chronology of the subject-matter with that of the language-act which reports it'; see also Guha on 'that hiatus between event-time and discourse-time which makes the verbal representation of the past less than accurate in the best of cases'. Barthes, 'Historical discourse', 147-8; Ranajit Guha, 'The prose of counter-insurgency', in Guha and Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies*, 77.

[25] Bourdieu, *Outline*, 83-4.

rigour; reflexivity; a focus on actions construed in context and in terms of their significance to protagonists rather than as causes of subsequent outcomes; systematic attention to the mechanics, politics, rhetorics and cultures of discourse production, archiving and interpretation. The contingent, contested and present status of all knowing - ethnographic and oral included - underscores the value to an ethnographic historian of traces of past actions, what people did and said, inscribed in contemporary texts. As cultural artefacts, imbued contextually with meanings, actions had a public, symbolic dimension which enables their traces to be read and translated, given a grasp of actors' idioms of expression and communication and recorders' codes and rhetorics. The actions and meanings of those protagonists who interest me most - Melanesians in New Caledonia in the 19th century - are shadowed and deformed in the lens of a colonial discourse, alien, ethnocentric, racist, élitist, sexist and archived. Decoding the systemic distortions of these very tainted, very selected texts in order to read them for information has to be systematic, imaginative and self-conscious. All historians read carefully and critically between the lines, but intransigent texts such as these require the deconstructionist metaphor of reading against the grain, while, as Guha cautions, taking nothing for granted, not even the assumption of colonial bias: 'Criticism must . . . start not by naming a bias but by examining the *components of the discourse* for the manner in which these . . . combined to describe any particular figure of the past'.[26]

Despite recent synergy and liminal persons, history and anthropology continue, properly and productively, to differ in focus, temporal perspective and methods of enquiry. As history, ethnographic history privileges the idiosyncrasies and particularity of past actions and experience, construed in cultural and strategic contexts, while alert to patterns which might be distilled from the selective, archived debris of the past. 'Historical ethnography' I understand as having a mildly different emphasis: generalised description of a past culture and its social relations. They are not antithetical, but a matter of focus, and can coexist within a single text. While in much modern anthropological theory action is no longer subordinate to structure, nonetheless anthropologists interested in their interplay are normally concerned with systems of action, action as an abstract category, rather than the contextualised actions which are historians' meat and drink; this was so of the Sahlins of *Historical Metaphors*, though not of the anthropology of

[26] Guha, 'Prose', 53-71, my emphasis.

experience and performance,[27] nor the most recent Sahlins who, in sophisticated resurrection of unfashionable 'great man' history, argued for the potential causal significance of the actions of aristocratic Fijians.[28]

Sahlins's concept of culture, like Geertz's from another perspective,[29] remains too monolithic for my liking, but his theory of the transformative potential of structures of the conjuncture, and argument that cultural redefinition in action contexts was informed by the logic of the culture itself - e.g., 'tabuing the temples' in Hawaii[30] - comprised an advance in what is arguably the greatest conceptual challenge to both disciplines: to think and use historically grounded, ethnosensitive theories of transformation, which displace bald polarities and privilege the emergent dialectics of structures and actions, 'discipline and invention',[31] 'conditioning and creativity',[32] or, in Turner's felicitous phrase, the 'rubbing together of the hardwood and softwood of tradition and presence'.[33] This question of conceptualisation of social and cultural continuity and change has been a running sore in Pacific historiography and vexes anthropologists as they flock to history.[34] The atheoretical empiricism of most historians, Marxists aside, prevented our conceptualising the problem at all: 'island-centred' historians mostly resorted to *a priori* rationalist emphasis on internal factors; Marxist historians had theory, but its crude, materialist determinism gave little play to human agency or, indeed, to cultures.[35] Concurrently, anthropologists were becoming increasingly sensitive to the ways in which an eternalised ethnographic present led them to deny the past and the future: in so many conventional ethnographies, the natives were perpetual exotics, inhabiting discrete,

[27] E.g., Johannes Fabian, *Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations through Proverbial Wisdom and Theatre in Shaba, Zaire* (Madison 1990); Bruce Kapferer, 'Entertaining demons: comedy, interaction and meaning in a Sinhalese healing ritual', in Bruce Kapferer (ed.), *The Power of Ritual: Transition, Transformation and Transcendence in Ritual Practice*, special issue, *Social Analysis*, 1 (1979), 108-52.; Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (eds), *Symbol and Politics in Communal Ideology: Cases and Questions* (Ithaca 1975); idem, *Secular Ritual* (Assen 1977); Turner, *Forest*, 151-279; Turner and Bruner (eds), *Anthropology of Experience*.

[28] Sahlins, *Islands*, xiv, 125, fn. 11, 136-56; idem, 'Return of the event', 63-80.

[29] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London 1975).

[30] Marshall Sahlins, 'The apotheosis of Captain Cook', *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers*, 53 (1976), 4; idem, *Historical Metaphors*, 70.

[31] Roger Chartier, 'Text, printing, readings', in Hunt (ed.), *New Cultural History*, 173.

[32] Bourdieu, *Outline*, 95; idem, *The Logic of Practice*, tr. Richard Nice (Cambridge 1990), 52-65.

[33] Turner, 'Dewey, Dilthey and drama', 33; Bruner, 'Experience', 12, 20.

[34] E.g., Biersack (ed.), *Clio*; Carrier (ed.), *History and Tradition*.

[35] E.g., Azeem Amarshi, Kenneth Good and Rex Mortimer, *Development and Dependency: the Political Economy of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne 1979); Alexander Mamak and Ahmed Ali, *Race, Class and Rebellion in the South Pacific* (Sydney 1979).

essential, timeless traditional worlds. Such perspectives ignored the flux, interrelationships, competition and internal dynamics of so-called 'traditional societies' and at best paid lip service to the multiple, creative ways in which most objects of ethnographic description had already engaged with novelties, as converts, traders, labourers, police, and had encountered the more or less compelling, more or less coercive structures of a colonialism bent on pacification and control.

Whereas Sahlins promoted causal analysis on the grand scale, ethnographic and 'island-centred' historians alike tend to be allergic to causes, because they are prefigured in subsequent outcomes.[36] Anticipated in contemporary colonial texts, retrospective in many histories and modern political ideologies, implicit in the very concept and experience of the ethnographic present, seemingly inevitable outcomes, such as 'colonial conquest', 'cultural destruction' and 'underdevelopment', cast lengthy, deforming shadows over power relationships experienced and meanings forged in contemporary local settings. The past always has meanings in present contexts and desire to explain how the present came to be seems to be a pan-human concern, but historians' unproblematic mirroring of the past in the image of the present is not only anachronistic, but antithetical to any notion of an on-going dialectic. Rejection of the tyranny of outcomes is one manifestation of a philosophical inclination to see actors as intending subjects, rather than just as passive objects/victims of abstract or extrinsic causation.[37] 'Island-centred' historiography emphasised Islander agency empirically, in reaction to the mindless Eurocentrism of imperial texts. My own intent to depict actors divested of the abstract causality in which they are mired by much conventional historiography is intensely political, as is that of members of the subaltern studies school, who assaulted the distorting, dehumanising aspects of modern nationalist discourse as well as the more familiar colonial whipping boy.[38] The project is a challenge to the academic hegemony enjoyed by positivist perspectives which privileged one element in the relationships structure:action, society:individual, rather than an equally

[36] Bourdieu, *Outline*, 8-9; idem, *Logic*, 55-6; Burke, *Historical Anthropology*, 3; Guha, 'Prose', 47; John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London 1976), 46-7.

[37] Bruner, 'Experience'; Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 310; Douglas, 'Ethnography'; Fabian, 'Religious movements', 13-14; Guha, 'Prose', 45-7, 77, 82-4; Sherry B. Ortner, 'Theory in anthropology since the sixties', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26 (1984), 126-66; David Parkin, 'Introduction', in David Parkin (ed.), *Semantic Anthropology* (London 1982); Philipp, 'Traditional historical narrative', 346-50; Marilyn Strathern, 'Introduction', in Marilyn Strathern (ed.), *Dealing with Inequality: Analysing Gender Relations in Melanesia and Beyond* (Cambridge 1987), 21-5.

[38] Guha, 'Prose'; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in Guha and Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies*, 3-32.

reductionist argument for untrammelled individual subjectivity:[39] human actions and choices are clearly more or less limited by pragmatic and discursive constraints, including differential access to knowing and nominative power, but such constraints must be taken in context, rather than for granted.

Difference, between and within 'cultures' and between past and present, has become an icon of my knowing and doing. One of anthropology's liberating contributions to history was a semiotic concept of culture which invited more rigorous conceptualisation of otherness and its extrapolation to all pasts. Historians could no longer assume that past actors, whether of the West or the rest, behaved in utilitarian, common sense terms, assumed to be universal (i.e., the same as ours);[40] clearly, though, the symbolic expressions of past actors were not so different as to be unrecognisable and unreadable, since absolute difference logically implies a bar to any knowing. In Pacific history, the idea of universal common sense was part and parcel of that 'island-centred' revolution of which my earlier self was an enthusiastic and still unrepentant part. Conceived in rebuttal of racist stereotypes about the irrationality of primitives, it, too, was ethnocentric and positivist unless informed by sensitivity to the multiple but precise ways in which others construed utility, rationality and common sense. Paradoxically, however, the concept of wholesale difference between *cultures* troubles many modern anthropologists, who properly question the conventional assumption in their discipline of radical alterity between 'them' and 'us' - the false consciousness of 'Orientalism', which objectifies the Other defined exclusively with reference to the touchstone of Ourselves.[41] At a time when some 'new historians' had embraced a little too uncritically a configurational notion of culture as unified, homogeneous and enduring, anthropologists and others were warning against essentialism: cultures are plural, decentred, contested, negotiated, inventive, discursive and mutable; knowledge is not equally shared but differentially 'distributed and controlled'.[42] A logical extreme of this position is the

[39] Bourdieu, *Outline*, 73, 84, 86, 95; idem, *Logic*, passim; Michael Jackson, *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Enquiry* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1989), 1-3.

[40] E.g., Geertz, *Interpretation*; idem, 'The uses of diversity', *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 23 (1986), 105-23; idem, 'Common sense as a cultural system', in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York 1983), 73-93.

[41] Carrier (ed.), *History and Tradition*; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London 1985 [1978]).

[42] Roger M. Keesing, 'Anthropology as interpretive quest', *Current Anthropology*, 28 (1987), 161; Bourdieu, *Outline*, 183-97; Roger Chartier, 'Text, symbols, and Frenchness', *Journal of Modern History*, 57 (1985), 687-94; idem, 'Text, printing, readings', 169-70; Clifford, *Predicament*; Roger M. Keesing, 'Conventional metaphors and anthropological metaphysics: the problematic of cultural translation', *Journal of Anthropological Research*,

haunting postmodernist image of an awful global sameness, in advertising hoarding, transit lounge, popular music, dress and slang, urbanisation, migration and shared impotence to bureaucratic and transnational bastardry - personally I do not believe it, or not all of it.[43]

Like James Clifford, I cannot jettison the concept of cultures, despite its compromised status,[44] if for no other reason than its salience in modern political contexts, as a reflex of the highly charged, contested notions of 'identity', 'tradition' and 'custom'. *Kastom, la coutume, vaka viti, fa'a Samoa*, are Pacific variants of a widespread problematic, particularly in multi-ethnic emerging or disintegrating nations. Historians can make telling contribution to such debates by helping chart the temporal dialectics of symbolic reproduction, manipulation, transformation and invention in particular action contexts; they will not do so by disguising unadmitted partisan positions as lofty objectivity or by marvelling at the naïveté or iniquity of people who mistake or distort what their past 'was really like'. The former stance betrays illegitimate claim to the authority of the 'reality effect', the latter unwitting adherence; by refusing to concede historians' complicity in normal human processes of making the past in the present, the one ensures enmeshment in political polemic, the other irrelevance to present interests, in either case negating the historian's ostensible intent.

It is my sense that historians need to up their game. Our routine expertise in the location and rigorous critical analysis of documents is not in question, nor its relevance as our most attractive and valued strength.[45] We should, however, aim to be more precise and explicit in our selection of concepts and their deployment in reading and writing. This means readiness to engage creatively and critically with a variety of theoretical and philosophical perspectives, to tackle with an open, not defensive mind the task of learning their lexicons, however difficult and arcane they might seem, to be more reflective about practices - our own as well as those of actors and authors in the past.[46] It does not mean slavish and adversarial adherence to one or another theory; history's glory is the possibility - indeed, the positive

41 (1985), 201-17; Said, *Orientalism*; Nicholas Thomas, 'Alejandro Mayta in Fiji: narratives about millenarianism, colonialism, postcolonial politics, and custom', in Biersack (ed.), *Clio*, 297-328; Turner and Bruner (eds), *Anthropology of Experience*.

[43] Cf. Clifford, *Predicament*, 1-17.

[44] Ibid., 10.

[45] Lynn Hunt, 'Introduction: history, culture, and text', in Hunt (ed.), *New Cultural History*, 22; Iain McCalman, 'Gone tropo - a Blake convert reflects on history, literature and culture', *Australian Historical Association Bulletin*, 66-67 (1991), 74-6.

[46] Bourdieu's translator remarked: 'an adequate theory of practice . . . must include a theory of scientific practice'. Richard Nice, 'Translator's foreword', in Bourdieu, *Outline*, vii.

advantages - of pluralism/eclecticism.[47] I favour strategic appropriation of others' concepts for our own purposes of subversion, self-assertion, -renewal and -transformation. We cannot ignore the insights of critical theory, structural linguistics and hermeneutics, at least as they are mediated by many anthropologists and some historians. The Pacific is marginal in the discipline of history - how many publishers' blurbs these days have a category of Pacific history, or even one in which it can reasonably appropriately be included? In anthropology, however, the Pacific is in the mainstream, Melanesia being an original breeding-ground of the modern discipline. And anthropologists are increasingly receptive to us: Dening, Thomas and myself have contributed essays to anthropological collections and I was recently a Visiting Fellow in an Anthropology department. But as they grapple with our skills and expertise, we must be able to meet them on their ground, as well as our own.

[47] James Boon, *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts* (Cambridge 1982), 20-1; Natalie Z. Davis, 'Anthropology and history in the 1980s', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 12 (1981), 273; Hunt, 'Introduction', 15-16, 22; see also Biersack, 'Local knowledge, local history: Geertz and beyond', in Hunt (ed.), *New Cultural History*, 72-96.

EIGHT

Sorcery, 'Savage Memories', and the Edge of Commensurability for History in the Pacific

DAVID HANLON

'SORCERY', BEGINS THE editor's introduction to a collection of essays on contemporary Melanesian societies, 'is a difficult subject to study; difficult to observe, difficult to gain perspective on, and difficult to reduce to neat and simple cross-culturally applicable concepts and terminology'.[1] Any consideration of sorcery in a people's past runs even greater risks; nonetheless, I endeavour in this essay to say something about sorcery as a topic of historical investigation, the interpretative dilemmas surrounding it, and the implications of such inquiry for the practice of history in the Pacific. This paper begins with a piece of theatre, moves to local accounts and ethnographic representations of sorcery on Pohnpei, surveys anthropological and historical thought on the more general topic of magic, includes a narrative of a personal encounter, and ends with a consideration of the problems a topic such as sorcery poses for Pacific history.

Peter Pan as Prologue

For a workshop that requires an explicit recognition of the context and circumstances that led individuals to the practice of history in the Pacific, I begin - somewhat tongue in cheek - with Sir James Barrie's *Peter Pan*. It would have been difficult for anyone coming of age in the English-speaking world of the 20th century to avoid a meeting with the boy, always played by an actress, who refused to grow up. A 1971 publication estimated that, apart from the play's wide readership over the course of this century, as many as

[1] Marty Zelenietz, 'Sorcery and Social Change: An Introduction', in Marty Zelenietz and Shirley Lindenbaum (eds), *Sorcery and Social Change in Melanesia: A Special Issue of Social Analysis*, no. 8 (1981), 3.

45 million people had seen *Peter Pan* in one form or another,[2] a figure that has most certainly increased through the revivals and reissues of the last two decades, and that will soon jump dramatically again with this Christmas season's issue of the Steven Spielberg version entitled *Hook*. *Peter Pan* has become a cultural emblem of sorts in the modern and post-modern Euro-American world and open to a wide variety of interpretations by scholars which space precludes canvassing here.[3]

It is the role and representation of the island in *Peter Pan*, called 'Never Never Land', that motivates my remembering the play now. 'Second [star] to the right, and straight on till morning' were the directions Barrie gave in the original 1904 version of the play for getting to Never Never Land. I discovered in a 1920 scenario drafted by Barrie for a prospective movie version of *Peter Pan* a more definitive, if revised geographical location for the island. Having passed over the Thames River and the Houses of Parliament, Peter, Wendy, Tinker Bell, and the Darling brothers fly across the Atlantic, spend the night in the mothering uplifted arms of New York's Statue of Liberty, journey through the skies over America, and finally enter the Pacific 'where', writes Barrie, 'the Never Never Land is'.[4] Glorious and peaceful in the light of day, the island becomes dark and threatening as the sun goes down. Inhabited by pirates, fairies, lost boys, redskins of the 'Fenimore Cooper' type, and wild animals, the Never Never Land is, according to one critic, the imagined island of childhood, a place of make-believe, dreams, fears, magic, and escape.

I thought, in the original crafting of this paper, that I might use the play *Peter Pan* as an intellectual springboard from which to examine European attitudes toward a vast watery expanse dotted with a multitude of Never Never Lands. It strikes me that there is, among other applied forms of domination and control over the area, a pronounced tradition toward using the Pacific as a setting for literary musings and social reflections about Euro-American selves and society, a proclivity that comes at the expense of history, especially indigenous conceptions of history. To explore such a theme, though, would necessitate an extended consideration of European culture and consciousness over the last several hundred years - a project already considerably advanced by the work of Bernard Smith and Oskar Spate. I decided instead on a more modest effort; an examination of the link between *Peter Pan*'s Never Never Land and Pacific pasts. That link is sorcery. Toward the end of the play,

[2] Harry M. Geduld, *Sir James Barrie* (New York 1971), 62.

[3] See for example Janet Dunbar, *J. M. Barrie: The Man Behind the Image* (Boston 1970). David Holbrook, *Images of Women in Literature* (New York 1989), 72. Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London 1984). See the author's introduction, pp. 1-11, for a summary of the book's themes and issues.

[4] James Matthew Barrie, 'Scenario for a Proposed Film of *Peter Pan*', in Roger Lancelyn Green, *Fifty Years of Peter Pan* (London 1954), 182.

Captain Hook uses the fairy Tinker Bell to attempt Pan's destruction just as sorcerers, practitioners of more malevolent magic, might enlist supernatural beings to bring about the demise of rivals. But where literary critics of *Peter Pan* might see allegory, metaphor, or simply an imaginative vehicle to advance the play's plot, I hold sorcery to be the stuff of history for at least one Pacific Island.

'Savage Memories' of Sorcery at Nahlapenlohd and Ohwa on Pohnpei

The issues surrounding the place of magic or sorcery in the study of the past hint at larger dilemmas that face practitioners of Pacific history or history in the Pacific. I begin with the argument that our collective inability to acknowledge or represent sorcery and other indigenous categories of experience in any form that speaks to their place in Pacific pasts marks what Stanley Tambiah has called the 'edge of commensurability'.[5] At this edge, cross-cultural comparisons, translation, and interpretation become increasingly problematic; serious questions loom about the practice of history in the Pacific. To underscore the point, I turn first to indigenous accounts of two separate wars on the island of Pohnpei in the Eastern Caroline group in Micronesia. In my rendering of these two events and the sorcery associated with them, I rely on a series of interviews carried out in 1983 with local historians of the island. I have borrowed Michael Taussig's phrase 'savage memories' to characterise these accounts of a pre-colonial past, the elements of autonomy and resistance that infuse them, and their persisting opposition to alien forms of historical expression that followed in the wake of colonialism.[6] I acknowledge too that the interview process, the recording, transcription and translation of these oral testimonies, and my own narrative presentation of the incidents in question are not themselves beyond analysis. Nonetheless, I offer a consideration of these events because of what they reveal about a people's understanding of themselves, their past, and the forces at work in that past. As further preface, and at the risk of being reductionistic, I feel it necessary to acknowledge the distinctive, culturally informed ways in

[5] Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge 1990), 127. In referring to the point at which cross-cultural comparison fails, Tambiah writes: 'This is the very edge of the divide to which the process of translation may lead us, the edge which is a situation of incommensurable exclusivity'. In developing his argument, Tambiah draws heavily on the work of philosophers Bernard Williams and Peter Winch.

[6] Michael Taussig, 'History as Sorcery', *Representations*, no. 7 (Summer 1984), 95.

which history is produced on Pohnpei.[7] I find the practice of history on Pohnpei to be oral in form, personal in its concerns and interests, event centred, locally focused, attentive to sequence, literal in its representation of events, multiple in the versions and variations of a single event, privileged in terms of access, and contested as to detail, meaning and significance.

The first struggle took place in late 1850 and involved the violent culmination of a 15-year rivalry for hegemony in the southeastern part of the island between the chiefdoms of Kiti and Madolenihmw. The second struggle, in 1890, pitted Spanish colonisers against Pohnpeians from the northeast areas of Madolenihmw. Political boundaries on Pohnpei have always been tentative, fragile constructions subject to the changing mix of resource requirements, personal ambitions, kinship obligations, and clan politics.[8] By 1850, there had emerged on the island four paramount chiefdoms, each controlled to varying degrees and through subtle but important distinctions by two parallel lines of chiefly titles. In theory, the Nahnmwarki ruled as paramount chief and at the head of a matrilineally determined ranking of noble chiefs called *soupeidi*. The Nahnken, often characterised as a prime minister or chief counsellor in the anthropological literature on the island, led a second junior line of titleholders considered to be the *serihso* or 'sacred children' of the senior *soupeidi* line. Both within and beyond these chiefly polities, there existed smaller territorial units, the inhabitants of which often contested the dominant arrangements or configurations of power over or around them. Warfare and violent rivalry constituted a feature of Pohnpeian life but the violence tended to be limited, sporadic, and over quickly. Acquisition and concession rather than destruction or subjugation were the objectives of conflict on the island. The introduction of firearms in the first decades of the 19th century proved more a deterrent than a promoter of large-scale destruction. Foreign diseases had already begun to affect the island's population, though the devastating smallpox epidemic of 1854 was still several years away when Kiti began contesting with the ritually more senior chiefdom of Madolenihmw for dominance in the southeast.

[7] For a more detailed consideration of the ways in which history is produced and practised on the island, see David Hanlon, 'The path back to Pohnsakar: Luelen Bernart, his book, and the practice of history on Pohnpei', *Isla: A Journal of Micronesian Studies*, 1:1 (1992), forthcoming. Klaus Neumann gives extensive consideration to local histories and their meaning in *Not The Way It Really Was: Constructing the Tolai Past* (Honolulu 1992).

[8] The most thorough examination of Pohnpei's chiefly system of rule remains Saul H. Riesenberg, *The Native Polity of Ponape* (Washington 1968). For a decidedly different view of government on Pohnpei and its origins, see Glenn Petersen, 'Some Overlooked Complexities in the Study of Pohnpei Social Complexity', in Rosalind L. Hunter-Anderson (ed.), *Recent Advances in Micronesian Archaeology: A Special Issue of Micronesica*, supp. 2 (1990), 137-52.

A series of raids and counter-raids preceded the pivotal battle that took place in late 1850.[9] An attack by Nahnku, the Nahnken of Kiti, on the Sapwehrek section of Madolenihmw resulted in loss of life and the destruction of dwellings and food plants. The raid on Sapwehrek was returned by warriors from Madolenihmw who fell on the section of Mwudok along the extreme southern coast of Kiti; three people died. A period of intermittent conflict followed in which the rivals probed, tested and punished one another. Finally, tensions built to such a level that the Nahnken of Kiti, the de facto ruler of the chiefdom because of the then reigning Nahnmwarki's poor health, called for a formal battle at Nahlapenlohd, a small reef islet off the southeastern coast of Pohnpei proper and near the on-shore border between the two chiefdoms.

Memories and accounts of the war from Kiti stress the superior efficacy of that region's sorcerers.[10] In preparation for the fight, the Nahnken of Kiti gathered his forces at Penieu, a small reef islet off Mwudok. One oral account stresses the overwhelming potency of the *pai en Kiti*, a particularly strong, supernatural force associated with the chiefdom of Kiti and brought by the Sounair clan during the formative or founding period in the island's past.[11] Another account identifies the assistance of powerful sorcerers such as Tikorano and Wasekeleng who chanted prayers and made offerings to solicit the direct intervention of supernatural beings.[12] All accounts I gathered acknowledge the appearance off Penieu of a fleet of canoes paddled not by men but spirits and describe the ghostly occupants of the canoes as thin, sickly, extremely emaciated in appearance.

Through the performance of *kosetipw* or divination, it was determined that the ghostly fleet would paddle along the shoreline toward Nahlapenlohd, while the Nahnken would take his body of live warriors in canoes beyond the reef and approach the appointed site of battle from the open ocean. The plan was for the ghost fleet to distract the Madolenihmw forces gathered at Nahlapenlohd while the main Kiti contingent descended upon the islet undetected from the sea. The ruse worked. Kiti accounts of the war delight in the derision and laughter that emanated from the Madolenihmw side at the

[9] A summary account of the 15-year struggle can be found in David Hanlon, *Upon a Stone Altar: A History of the Island of Pohnpei to 1890* (Honolulu 1988), 82-4. See also John L. Fischer, Saul H. Riesenberg, and Marjorie G. Whiting, *Annotations to the Book of Luelen* (Honolulu 1977), 103-5.

[10] In researching the 1850 war between Kiti and Madolenihmw, I conducted interviews with the following Kiti historians or *soupoad*: Benno Serilo, 30 May 1983, Ohlapel, Kiti; Ioannis Paulino, 6 June 1983, Rohi, Kiti; the late Sohn Hadley, 9 June 1983, Mwudok, Kiti; Francisco Miguel, 24 June 1983, Semwei, Kiti; and Andolin Andereias, 3 July 1983, Mwoakot, Kiti. Notes from these interviews are in my possession.

[11] Serilo, 30 May 1983, Ohlapel, Kiti.

[12] Miguel, 24 June 1983, Semwei, Kiti.

sight of the weak pale paddlers of the ghostly fleet. Shots fired by haughty and arrogant men at the approaching canoes had no effect. Disbelief gave way to terror as the Kiti spirits raised their paddles, aimed them at the Madolenihmw warriors, and uttered a death spell called *kesik dol* which caused several defenders to drop dead on the spot.

As men from Madolenihmw desperately sought to cope with supernatural beings acting on behalf of Kiti, the Nahnken's war fleet, as planned, reached the islet unnoticed. With the help of resident beachcombers and a specially rigged cannon using pieces of iron chain as cannon shot, Kiti laid waste to surviving defenders. So great was the shedding of blood on the islet as a result of the battle, go the Kiti histories, that vegetation ceased to grow and the islet itself shrank back into the sea. As testament to the event and the veracity of their accounts, Kiti historians point to the fact that just a small portion of the islet's area is visible today, and only at low tide. The battle at Nahlapenlohd did not end hostilities between the two areas, at least immediately, but did contribute to Kiti's eventual pre-eminence, the redistribution of important ruling titles in both chiefdoms, and the acknowledgement of Kiti's suzerainty over the mountainous border areas with Madolenihmw in the southeast.

Madolenihmw accounts of the war identify not the superior sorcery of Kiti but divisions and rivalries within Madolenihmw as the reason for the chiefdom's loss at Nahlapenlohd.[13] A divided polity since its inception, Madolenihmw suffered from the near constant state of strife among the various factions within its ruling clan, the Dipwenpahnmei. In 1836, the chiefdom had been further disturbed by the *Falcon* incident in which the seizure of a grounded ship's cargo and the murder of its contentious captain led to retaliation by an alliance of ships' captains, traders, beachcombers, and rival groups of Pohnpeians that replaced the senior line of the ruling subclan of the Dipwenpahnmei with a more junior line.[14] The hostility engendered between the usurped and usurping groups, coupled with the restiveness of yet a third line located in the Lohd section of southern Madolenihmw, led to an extremely tense and divided state of affairs. The leader of this third line held the rank of Nahnawa en Madolenihmw, one of the senior *soupeidi* titles. Madolenihmw historians identify Nahnawa and his people as being behind the provocation of Kiti or at least the persistent and violent responses to Kiti's intrusion. The still newly ascendant Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw, known by the honorific death title of *Luhk en Kidu*, thus found himself challenged from within and beyond his chiefdom's borders.

[13] Pers. comm., Masao Hadley, 20 June 1983, Mesihsou, Madolenihmw. Hadley, a high titled individual, the son of a past Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw, and the most publicly prominent historian on the island, is also the author of a written history of Nan Madol.

[14] For one account of the 1836 *Falcon* incident, see Hanlon, *Upon a Stone Altar*, 50-7.

Local histories from both Kiti and Madolenihmw assert that the Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw solved his dilemma by accepting the Nahnken of Kiti's challenge and immediately turning over responsibility for the agreed upon battle at Nahlapenlohd to the Nahnawa of Madolenihmw and his people. The Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw's ultimate plan was to arrange for the elimination of an internal rival by leaving Nahnawa and his people alone, without any form of support, and hence vulnerable at Nahlapenlohd. Whether or not he was aware of the machinations designed to bring about his destruction, Nahnawa, as the most senior titleholder in southern Madolenihmw, had no choice but to accept the commission for the defence of territory within his jurisdiction. While Nahnawa occupied Nahlapenlohd with his men, the Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw held his numerically superior forces on the Madolenihmw mainland in the area of Lohd. When Kiti attacked, the Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw continued to withhold his men from battle, thus ensuring the destruction of Nahnawa and his men at Nahlapenlohd by the numerically superior and better armed Kiti forces. Whereas Kiti explains its triumph in terms of the efficacy of its superior sorcery, Madolenihmw locates its defeat in the more immediate, self-serving machinations of a paramount chief seeking to insure his privilege against internal threats. Forty years later, however, a more united Madolenihmw would employ its own brand of sorcery in its successful resistance to Spanish colonial intrusion in the northern area of the chiefdom.

The four decades following Madolenihmw's defeat at Nahlapenlohd witnessed the arrival of Catholic and Protestant missionaries, the increased presence of Western commercial activities, the continuing ravages of disease and subsequent social disruption, and the imposition of formal colonial rule. None of these forces, however, had as yet significantly secured Pohnpeians' acquiescence in any foreign system of government. Resistance to Spain, the first of the island's four colonial overlords, came quickly. Demands for Pohnpeian labour in the construction of the Spanish colony in the north of the island, the threat of coercion to force the provision of this labour, the bumbling of the first Spanish colonial governor, and the insults to Pohnpeian chiefs by Spanish representatives led to the temporary expulsion of the Spanish garrison, and the death of the governor and 50 soldiers in July 1887.[15] With the return of the Spaniards to the island and the sacrifice of three individuals to the demands of Spanish justice in lieu of the paramount chiefs of the north in whose name the violent resistance had taken place, calm was briefly restored. At Ohwa, in northern Madolenihmw, Spanish plans to construct another colonial outpost soon encountered strong opposition from

[15] Hanlon, *Upon a Stone Altar*, 144-65, provides an extended account of Spain's first months of colonial rule over the island and the violence that marked it.

a complex of competing interests that included American Protestant missionaries, various factions of Madolenihmw's ruling sub-clan, and Pohnpeians from other areas of the island allied with the Protestant Church or different groups within the chiefdom.[16] In early 1890, a party of soldiers began construction of the church and fort complex just 60 yards away from the existing Protestant mission station at Ohwa. Violence erupted several months later. On 25 June 1890, 31 soldiers including the commanding officer of the work detail were slain; the survivors were forced to flee the area. The colonial administration's immediate response was to send the warship *Manila* to bombard the area.

As had Kiti at Nahlapenlohd, Madolenihmw sought supernatural assistance in its efforts with an enemy. An advance party from the northern colony reached Ohwa in two longboats under the command of Captain Don Saturnino Serrano. As the soldiers began to wade ashore in knee-deep water, they came under a withering barrage of fire. Madolenihmw memories of the conflict claim the spirits of deceased warriors fired from the tops of trees while the living discharged their weapons from behind rocks, mounds, and logs.[17] The alliance of earthly and supernatural forces was facilitated by the use of deception as Pohnpeians raised white flags of surrender from the shore to entice the landing party closer. In the late afternoon of the next day, the *Manila* arrived off Ohwa. The Spanish commander blamed the ineffectiveness of the shelling of the shore on the age and small calibre of the ship's guns; Pohnpeians' accounts credit the spirits of dead warriors from battles long past with preventing the shells from reaching land.

In the process of bombarding the shore, the *Manila* ran upon the fringing reef. Three days were required to free her. During this period, several Madolenihmw warriors managed to reach the warship undetected in broad daylight and steal one of the longboats tied to the stern. Pohnpeian histories attribute the feat to the effective use of *rotensawas*, a magic that allows its users to move about undetected during daylight hours as if they were invisible; a spell known as *rihpe* was also employed to inhibit any form of retaliation from the ship's crew. Amazed that the enemy would attempt such a daring feat, the Spanish captain of the vessel, in his report, sheepishly

[16] A history of the 1890 violence between Spaniards and Pohnpeians in northern Madolenihmw can be found in Hanlon, *Upon a Stone Altar*, 183-97.

[17] Pers. comm., Hadley, 21 June 1983, Mesihsou, Madolenihmw. There is a Pohnpeian account of the 1890 war in Paul Hambruch, *Ponape, Ergebnisse der Südsee Expedition, 1908-1910*, ed. Georg Thilenius, II, Ethnographie B, Mikronesien, Bd. 7, vol. 1 (Hamburg 1932), 239-44. I obtained a third account from Serilo, 8 June 1983, Ohlapel, Kiti. Though a high titled member of Kiti's ruling clan, the Dipwinmen, and the head of a large family in the Wone area of southern Kiti, Serilo also has strong ties to and knowledge of Madolenihmw through his marriage to the daughter of a past Nahnmwarki of that chiefdom.

insisted that the preoccupation with freeing the ship from the reef had prevented his crew from more carefully monitoring the movement of the enemy.[18]

War in northern Madolenihmw would continue for another four months with Spanish efforts at forcefully repressing the rebellion frustrated by Pohnpeians' fighting strategies, their superior use and knowledge of the environment, and the power and efficacy of their sorcery. A second punitive expedition, made up of 500 Filipino soldiers recently arrived as reinforcements from Manila, set out from the Spanish colony on 13 September 1890, under the command of Colonel Isidro Gutierrez de Soto. The plan of this second expedition called for a two-pronged attack on Ohwa in which bombardment from two Spanish naval cruisers was to precede a ground assault by a column of soldiers marching overland from the Spanish colony in the north.

Pohnpeian sorcerers claimed (and claim) the ability to bring rain, cause floods, hold or restrain the tides, still the wind, and create mental disorientation and physical weakness in their opponents. These strategies of sorcery were now employed by Pohnpeians against renewed Spanish incursion in the north of Madolenihmw. Ironically, the claims made by modern-day island historians regarding the effectiveness of Madolenihmw's sorcery find strong echo in the Spanish accounts of the encounter. The column of soldiers marching overland from the colony became lost in the rugged terrain of the island.[19] Then came the rains. The Spaniards, themselves given to a strong belief in the intervention of the supernatural into secular affairs, experienced something eerie and uncanny in the heavy rains that pounded them. One marcher recorded: 'The clouds overhead hastened to defend the territory and hurled upon us a heavy shower which lasted for six consecutive hours, a downpour which seemed to be connected by a tie of kinship with the Universal Deluge'.[20] Drenched, exhausted, and demoralised, the column returned to the colony less than a day after beginning its march. The bombardment from the sea by the two Spanish cruisers proved equally ineffective for reasons that also had to do with Pohnpeians' effective use of sorcery. A landing party sent ashore to assess the damage found only abandoned dwellings.

[18] The Spanish account of the theft of the longboat can be found in Anacleto Cabeza Pereiro, *La Isla de Ponapé: Geografía, Etnografía, Historia* (Manila 1895), 190. Cabeza Pereiro was a military physician assigned to the Spanish colonial forces on the island in 1890.

[19] Cabeza Pereiro, *La Isla de Ponapé*, 196-8.

[20] United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1817-1899*, vol. 10, item no. 197 (Washington DC 1892). The quote is from an account of the expedition dated 25 Sept. 1890 and carried in the newspaper *El Diario de Manila*. The newspaper account was included as part of a dispatch from US Consul in Manila, Alec R. Webb, to US Assistant Secretary of State Wharton and dated 27 Oct. 1890.

A second attempt to attack Madolenihmw from both land and sea commenced two days later. Marching over more hospitable terrain and in much more clement weather, the column of troops reached the outskirts of Ohwa late in the afternoon and proceeded to make camp in preparation for the next day's assault. That night, however, Gutierrez de Soto, the leader of the Spanish expedition, died from what Spanish sources described as a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Pohnpeian historians credit the Spanish commander's death to a man named Repena who, employing techniques designed to conceal his movements from others, managed to slip into the colonel's tent at night, place the barrel of a pistol into the sleeping officer's mouth, and muffle the sound of the weapon's discharge by wrapping a blanket around its chamber.[21]

The return of the Spanish colonel's body for burial in the northern colony delayed the assault two days. The new commander, Captain Victor Diaz, decided upon a single amphibious landing. Following an extended and heavy bombardment of the shore, the Spanish forces launched a direct frontal assault on 19 September 1890. An unusually low tide, again no accident of nature according to Pohnpeian histories, forced the Spanish forces to leave their landing boats a considerable distance from shore. Upon reaching land, the Spaniards found the Pohnpeian defences uncanny, almost eerie. Just behind the shoreline, the Spanish soldiers came upon a line of double trenches surrounded by a deep moat. 'God knows by what expert but occult hand they were guided. . . Let us call the engineer the Ghost of Owa [sic]', wrote a member of the landing party.[22]

There was a final attempt by Spain to subdue Madolenihmw in November 1890. Again, Pohnpeians employed sorcery to direct both natural and supernatural forces against the Spanish presence. The final confrontation came at a place called Kitamw on the Lehdau River where the Pohnpeians had gathered and hastily constructed a stone fort. It was more like half a stone fort; indeed, that is what the Pohnpeians called it, *elep en kehl mwahu*. Two separate bodies of Spanish troops converging on the site from the west and the south were again hindered by floods under cloudless skies, sudden, unexpected and heavy rains, abnormally low tides, expertly crafted defensive structures, exceptional darkness, and general disorientation.[23] Spanish pressure eventually forced the abandonment of the stone fort at Kitamw, but all that their efforts had won for the Spaniards was a half-completed stone fort

[21] Pers. comm., Hadley, 21 June 1983, Mesihsou, Madolenihmw.

[22] United States Department of State, *FRUS, 1817-1899*, x:197 (1892), Webb to Wharton, 27 Oct. 1890. This quote is also from the account of the expedition dated 25 Sept. 1890 that appeared in the newspaper *El Diario de Manila*.

[23] Cabeza Pereiro, *La Isla de Ponapé*, 236.

which they quickly dismantled. Seeking to validate their hollow triumph, the Spanish administration declared Madolenihmw thoroughly defeated and proceeded to partition its territory between the two neighbouring chiefdoms of U and Kiti. The gesture was futile. Madolenihmw continued to exist autonomously as the ritually most senior of the island's polities.

Anthropological Representations of Sorcery on Pohnpei

How shall we interpret these indigenous histories, these 'savage memories' of past events, distinguished in part by their explicit reference to sorcerous agents? We might consider the ways in which these references legitimated the victory of certain chiefs and thus enhanced élitist forms of government. A less overtly political interpretation might focus on sorcery as providing a sense of human empowerment in the natural world or as a social strategy designed to promote cohesion and strength among threatened communities. Male histories of male-dominated events might suggest sorcery as justification for the state of gender relations on an island dominated by the interests and activities of males. The range of representation is indeed great, but any interpretative or re-interpretative evaluation might first consult specific ethnographies of Pohnpei and more general theoretical writings on the topics of magic and sorcery.

Sorcery exists not only in 'savage memories' of the Pohnpeian past but in the writings of German and American anthropologists. Paul Hambruch, who worked on the island between March and August of 1910 to provide ethnographic witness to the last remnants of a supposedly dying indigenous culture, recorded some of the spells, prayers, and incantations used by Pohnpeians to harness natural and supernatural forces to their purposes. Hambruch, for example, transcribed the spell used to hold the tide, a spell reportedly used successfully against Spanish forces in the violent encounters of 1890.[24] There is also recorded a spell titled *rotensowas* or 'darkness at noon', the kind employed by Pohnpeians to steal the longboat from the warship *Manila* while its crew struggled to free the ship from the reef. That spell reads:

> Atinei rot a pueniati rot,
> tsuka en pan ial kota pueniati
> a tsuka en pon ial koti pueniati
> i til nan mitir, a i puar nahn poki
> rir poki, rir poki, rir.[25]

[24] Hambruch, *Ponape*, II (1936), 142.

[25] Ibid., 144. This is a 1910 transcription of an oral Pohnpeian text. A rendering of this text to accord with the conventions of modern Pohnpeian orthography would create a very different looking and problematic text.

A translation of that spell - separated from its timing, the prescribed tone and inflection of its verbal delivery, accompanying gestures, and other contextually specific requirements - might read as follows:

> Dark cloud seal me in its darkness
> Come from above and cover me
> Come from below and cover me
> I move stealthily among the many
> I stand among the gathered
> Hidden from the crowd, hidden from the crowd, hidden.[26]

Hambruch also transcribed spells to lighten heavy boulders, to hold the tide, to cause or check flooding, to protect the preparation of kava or *sakau* (*Piper methysticum*), and to enhance the yield of planted yams.[27] Reference is also made to other spells designed to facilitate fishing, the felling of trees, the clearing of land, the building of canoes, and the construction of feast houses and dwellings. There is also mention of counter-spells designed to thwart these various activities when carried out by rivals. Hambruch in no way provided a complete inventory of the variety of purposes and activities for which Pohnpeians employed magic or sorcery; nor did he offer much comment or explanation of the spells, incantations, and practices he recorded. Reflecting the dominant paradigm of sociological thought in the early decades of the 20th century, Hambruch's limited investigation into Pohnpeian cosmology sought to expose a primitive mentality's efforts to explain the world through crude, groping, very unscientific thinking.[28]

Saul Riesenberg carried out his ethnographic fieldwork on Pohnpei in the immediate post World War II period, some 37 years after Hambruch. Unlike Hambruch's scientific scepticism, Riesenberg's descriptions had a functionalist orientation, but also conveyed an implicit recognition of the legitimacy of the practice of magic and sorcery. Riesenberg focused on the ways in which Pohnpeians used magic or sorcery to cause and cure illness. He distinguished between male and female herbal healers, called *sounwini* and *kadenwini* respectively, and others who attempted to harness larger, more volatile powers.[29] This latter group consisted of diviners or soothsayers, called *sounkosetipw*; magicians or *sounwinahni* who sought assistance through prayers and incantations; and *sounketieni* who sought the direct and

[26] This is my translation of the Pohnpeian text found in Hambruch, *Ponape*, II, 144.

[27] Hambruch, *Ponape* II, 141-5. See also the list of magical and sorcerous spells contained in Kenneth L. Rehg and Damian G. Sohl, *Ponapean-English Dictionary*, PALI Language Texts: Micronesia (Honolulu 1979), 191.

[28] Hambruch, *Ponape*, I (1932), 376.

[29] Saul H. Riesenberg, 'Magic and medicine in Ponape', *Southeastern Journal of Anthropology*, 4:4 (1948), 406-29. See also Roger L. Ward, 'Curing on Ponape: A Medical Ethnography', PhD thesis, Tulane University (New Orleans 1977).

intervention of gods, clan spirits, and the souls of deceased family members. Riesenberg paid particular attention to a form of sorcery, called *kau*, employed to bring about the death of an enemy. *Kau* was usually delivered by burying surreptitiously a piece of sennit lashing or two river pebbles under the corner of an adversary's dwelling. The buried articles were said to act in a month's time and have their greatest effect at dusk and midnight, usually causing pain, fever, loss of weight, and ultimate death.

A second form of *kau*, often resorted to when buried objects failed to work, involved the burning of dead coconut fronds at night. The flames were allowed to build to a certain height and a spell was recited; the sorcerer then used a knife or sharp instrument to cut the flames, sending them flying toward the residence of his intended victim. If not countered quickly, this form of sorcery brought about the death of its victim in four days. This most powerful form of *kau* was also its most dangerous for the user because of the visibility of the flying flames. A counter measure called *kasapahl* was designed to return the sorcery to its source, resulting in the death of the initiating sorcerer. Another form of *kau* or illness-carrying sorcery was called *kaluwenta* or 'trail of blood'. It was meant to travel by night and usually showed itself in the droplets of blood left near the dwelling of an intended victim. As with other forms of *kau*, a successful deflection or return of the sorcery to its place of origin saved the life of the victim and caused the death of the perpetrator.

Western discourse on the topics of magic and sorcery has in the past tended to distinguish between attempts to harness the forces of nature for good or gain, and efforts to bring harm, impediment, or destruction to one's enemy. This distinction shows itself in the works of Hambruch and Riesenberg. Most Pohnpeians today, however, consider that any effort at magic, no matter how seemingly benign its purpose, puts the magician at risk. Magicians run the danger of inadvertently consuming or otherwise coming into direct contact with the object of their magic; *pwurehng ah mour* is the Pohnpeian phrase for this occurrence, and death is its consequence. There is also the danger that efforts to enchant or to enlist natural or supernatural forces will run against the earlier or competing work of another magician. In this case, the stronger magic overrides the weaker, often causing the death of the less powerful or skilled practitioner.

A Historical Anthropology of Magic and Sorcery

While significantly different in their representations of magic and sorcery on Pohnpei, the ethnographies of Hambruch and Riesenberg tend to reflect the dominant anthropological thought of their respective times. Hambruch's work shows the influence of some of anthropology's earliest theorists on the place of magic and sorcery in the development or evolution of human societies. I turn now to a brief consideration of this thought. With its strong evolutionary

bias, the fledgling discipline of anthropology sought to expose and explain the assumedly natural, desirable progression from magical through religious to scientific systems of understanding. E. B. Tylor, one of the founders of the modern discipline of anthropology, saw magic as a pseudo-science based on the erroneous association of ideas; the notion that the sun rose because the cock crowed served as an example of what Tylor described as wrong causation.[30] Tylor viewed magical arts, witchcraft, and occult science as 'pernicious delusions' and saw no truth or value in this false art. Less didactic in his analysis, Sir James Frazer viewed primitive thought in supernatural areas as contributing ultimately to the natural power and persuasiveness of the world's great religions. In his multi-volume study of primitive rites and magical practices, Frazer distinguished between attempts to deliberately control superior powers and those efforts aimed at propitiation.[31] For Frazer, magic developed from human beings' confidence in their ability to dominate nature through the privileged knowledge of natural laws; in this respect, magic resembled science.[32] In contrast, Frazer viewed religion as the admission of human impotence in certain areas.

Other writers who followed Frazer expanded in different ways on the evolutionary progression from magic through religion to science. W. H. R. Rivers described the use of magic as the way in which 'rude forms of human society' endeavoured to treat and control disease.[33] In coping with disease, savage man, argued Rivers, was not 'illogical' or 'prelogical' but rather was guided by reasoning as definite as that guiding Western medical practices. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl described magic as informing a prelogical mentality in simple peoples, not bound by the laws of particularisation and not bothered by contradiction or inconsistency. In the absence of formal rules of logic, primitive thought, he contended, was vulnerable to mystical interpretation.[34] Bronislaw Malinowski described both religion and magic in terms of the functions they served in human society. Magic, in particular, was the union

[30] A very effective summary of Tylor's thinking on the relationship between magic and religion can be found in Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion* 42-50.

[31] Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abr. ed. (New York 1940). See especially the section entitled 'Magic and Religion', 48-60. Students of anthropology will know that Frazer's complete effort occupies 12 volumes and is a far-ranging attempt to explain the development of the priesthood of Diana at Arica. Vol. I of Frazer's work first appeared in 1911.

[32] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 50.

[33] W. H. R. Rivers, *Medicine, Magic and Religion: The Fitzpatrick Lectures Delivered Before the Royal College of Physicians in 1915 and 1916* (London 1924), 115.

[34] Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (*Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*), translated by Lilian A. Clare (Princeton 1985), 38. Clare's English translation of Lévy-Bruhl's work first appeared in 1926.

of man's steadfast desire with the urgent love of chance.[35] Malinowski believed that both religion and magic flourished within the realm of emotional stress. Magic and religion offered escapes into the domain of the supernatural in the absence of an empirical alternative or system of evaluation. For Malinowski, then, magic was objectively false but subjectively true.

Paul Radin also opted for a more functional approach, but one that interpreted belief in supernatural forces as a validation of everyday reality.[36] Radin argued for an evolutionary path that began with magic as a coercive, unmediated practice designed to help insure the satisfaction of immediate organic needs. The rise of religion and consequent decline of magic witnessed the freeing of human beings from compulsive, irrational reactions and allowed for more thoughtful approaches to the deeper questions of life. Emile Durkheim regarded magic as an elementary form of explanation that concerned itself with technical or utilitarian needs and that devoted little time to pure thought. Ultimately profaning of all things holy, magic, to Durkheim, did not bind but rather kept people apart. The development of religion, then, was an eminently social phenomenon that promoted the formation of a moral community united by a system of shared beliefs and practices on matters deemed sacred.[37] Though limited in space and negligent of some of the finer shades of argument, this brief survey of early theorists underscores an important point; anthropological or sociological thinking on the issue of magic and its sub-discipline sorcery sought to develop explanations that emphasised evolutionary progression, functional purposes, structural practices, symbolic properties, or social needs. Sorcery as historical force, fact or agent received almost no consideration.[38]

A 'Thumbnail Sketch' of the History of Magic and Sorcery

An understanding of the ways in which magic has been studied and interpreted requires a consideration of histories as well as anthropological constructions. I rely on Stanley J. Tambiah's recently published collection of

[35] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion - And Other Essays* (New York 1954), 89.

[36] Paul Radin, *Primitive Religion: Its Nature and Origin* (New York 1937), 19.

[37] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. by Joseph Ward Swain (New York 1965), 62. Durkheim's work first appeared in 1915.

[38] One anthropologist who did consider sorcery in history was E. E. Evans-Pritchard; see his *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford 1937); also *The Divine Kingship Among the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan* (Cambridge 1948). In the Pacific, attention to the topic of sorcery has focused on Papua New Guinea; see, e.g. the very fine collection of essays edited by Michele Stephen, *Sorcerer and Witch in Melanesia* (New Brunswick, N. J. 1987); also Gilbert Herdt and Michele Stephen, eds., *The Religious Imagination in New Guinea* (New Brunswick 1989). The focus of much of this recent ethnographic work, however, is not sorcery in history, but rather sorcery as social fact or belief system.

essays to provide a 'thumbnail sketch' of intellectual developments in the European past that affected the study of magic, religion, and science.[39] Tambiah writes that religion was defined in Roman times as both the acknowledgment of the existence of superior powers and an inner feeling of piety. In contrast to these very distinct and separate pagan meanings, early Christianity emphasised the importance of an organised community or Church, the concept of faith as clarified by church elders, and religion itself as being a total phenomenon. The Protestant Reformation promoted the sanctity of the personal relationship that existed between an individual and God, and decried the efforts of religious institutions to intervene in the intimacy of that relationship. The Enlightenment, however, advanced a view of religion that was far more cognitive, intellectual, and sociological in character. The personal relationship and visions of God emphasised by Reformationist teachings were now subordinated to a study of the beliefs and practices that served as vehicles of this relationship. Religion came to be regarded as a universal feature of all societies, relative in its different cultural expressions and instructive not in matters of absolute religious truth but on the like nature and needs of all humankind.

In the 19th century, approaches to the study of religion were affected by a pronounced commitment to historicise the Enlightenment's rationalist approach toward the topic. Fuelled by the writings of travellers and missionaries, a comparative focus set forth within an evolutionary framework promoted the objectification of religion as a field of study. Within this historical and intellectual milieu, there developed the discipline of anthropology with its pronounced concern for evolutionary schemes that explained the progression of human societies from magical through religious and scientific systems of explanation.

Tambiah argues that the traditions of biblical literalism, Greek rationalism, and a scientifically ordered empiricism all worked to affect early anthropological writings in ways that led to the presentation of magic as preface to religion. The idea of magic as opposed to religion was heavily influenced by the Judaic distinction between 'god' and 'nature'. Judaism separated God from nature. Yahweh came to be regarded as omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal. Pagan cosmology, in contrast to Judaic thought, has been represented as accepting the existence of a primordial realm, anterior and parallel to the natural world. Thus, unlike Yahweh, pagan gods or spirits did not transcend the universe but were rooted in it. Approaches to this primordial realm included ritual action of the type identified as magic. Influenced by the tone of Judaic thought, magic came to be viewed as a ritual

[39] Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion*, 4-15.

action valued for its effectiveness in dealing with forces or objects outside the realm of God.

Greek science contributed to the limenality of magic as explanation or effective power through its demarcation of the domains of science and the supernatural, and its emphasis on logic, argument, demonstration, and evidence to extend the empirical base of knowledge in the natural world. Greek rationalism, thus, presaged the development of a more aggressively scientific mentality or method that would come to reject empirically unfounded explanations as 'magical' or 'occult'. This scientific revolution was abetted significantly by the Protestant Reformation with its individual questioning of authority, its advocacy of a systematic, rational and empirical study of nature for the glorification of God, and its promotion of productive, utilitarian economic activity both within and beyond Europe. Keith Thomas writes that, as a result of these 16th and 17th century developments, magic succumbed to the more persuasive, explanatory, and democratic powers of science while religion managed to effect an epistemological compromise that allowed it to coexist with science.[40] While anthropology sought to rationalise magical practices and beliefs in terms of functional, evolutionary or sociological terms, historians merely charted the decline of magic's explanatory powers in the face of religious, scientific, intellectual and economic developments.

There would be no place then for sorcery in history among the professional texts written about the past. As we in so far as we believe in those canons and the categories of analysis they promote as appropriate, there remains no place for sorcery in history. The literature from centuries of anthropological and historical discourse in the European world has been committed to the rationalisation or interpretation of sorcery as something other than experienced. And yet, research and experience lead me to argue that sorcery is a fact in both the Pohnpeian past and present - perhaps in other Pacific pasts and presents as well - and that no amount of social, anthropological or historical rationalisation will diminish sorcery as something known through experience rather than through a system of belief vulnerable to an alien propensity to theorise, rationalise, or interpret.

E. P. Thompson addressed the issue of fact versus theory in an essay entitled 'The Poverty of Theory'. In that essay, the Marxist historian Thompson, aiming specifically at the writings of the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, railed against an exclusively theoretical or philosophical approach to life that denied the force of experience and ignored the dialectic between

[40] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London 1971), 636. See especially Thomas's summary chapter entitled 'The Decline of Magic', 641-68.

social being and social consciousness.[41] Concerned with the injustices about him and with the subtle ways in which those injustices could be obscured in the name of scholarship and intellectual inquiry, Thompson insisted that there did indeed exist incontrovertible facts not infinitely malleable or subject to fanciful manipulation. We are confronted then with the longstanding opposition between interpretation and experience, but exacerbated in the case of sorcery as the stuff of history in the Pacific by cross-cultural as well as varying temporal contexts. Where do I, where do we, go from here?

Ohlapel - 1972

To highlight further the issues posed by a consideration of sorcery in history, I wish to return to the play *Peter Pan*. Jacqueline Rose acknowledges the literary critic's dilemma in assessing a popular piece of theatre received so enthusiastically by audiences oblivious to, indifferent about, or unconcerned with the numerous disturbing themes that are said to riddle the commercial product that has become *Peter Pan*.[42] I myself sat among an audience on Pohnpei that was entertained and comforted by a sorcerer's act in the spring of 1972. As a Peace Corps volunteer, I was involved in a community development project committed to the construction of a secondary road for Ohlapel, a hill community in the extreme south of the island. The population of Ohlapel was approximately 200 at the time and dispersed among 10 physically separate but blood related homesteads. Strong ties of kinship and shared history linked Ohlapel with the larger Wone area, formerly known as Onohnleng. It was from Onohnleng that the Nahnken of Kiti recruited many of his warriors for the battle at Nahlapenlohd in 1850.

The work involved digging trenches, laying a bed or foundation of rocks, packing and filling that bed with earth, levelling the surface of the road, and grading its shoulder; it was usually done on Saturdays and over a period of several months. The effort proved a true community project in which the tools were simple, the labour manual, the work shared, and with periods of intense physical activity followed by equally lengthy periods of rest marked by song, story, and talk. We started early in the morning on one particular Saturday and carried on for several hours before heavy rain began to fall, precluding the possibility of any further work. A noon meal was distributed in a nearby *nahs* or open feasting house where people had gathered. After the meal, *sakau*, or kava, was brought into the *nahs*, cut, cleaned, placed upon several large flat stones resting atop the earthen floor of the structure, and then pounded with

[41] E. P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory', in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (New York 1988), 30.

[42] Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, 111-12.

large, hand-held rocks. After the rituals and etiquette of the first cups, all assembled settled into an afternoon of drinking and conversation while the rain continued to fall heavily. An hour or so later, the stream along which the *nahs* was located began to overflow its banks; water soon reached the base of the large flat stones on which the *sakau* had been pounded and was now being squeezed through long wet sheaths made from the inner bark of young hibiscus branches. Given the intensity of the continuing rain and the loud, rushing torrent that the stream had become, it appeared certain that water would soon cover the *sakau* stones causing the disruption and possible abandonment of the gathering and the *sakau* drinking.

Severino Alpons, an old enfeebled man known for his potent sorcery, was present and, in full view of all, beckoned to his grandson, Akilino. The teenage boy approached, took a handful of pebbles from his grandfather, listened intently to the instructions given, then walked to the raging stream and cast the pebbles into the water. Within moments, the stream's waters began to subside even though the heavy rain continued. I used to wonder if the sorcerer's act was cued by a reading of cloud formations in the sky, the songs of birds, the croaking of frogs, the length and intensity of the rains, or a knowledge of the flooding patterns of the stream based on a lifetime of observation and experience. In any event, no one among the gathered or in the larger community had any doubt about the efficacy of the magic they had witnessed or heard about. Several months later, Severino Alpons died. His last conscious act in life was to laugh at an offer to have a priest perform last rites for him; his death struck many as eminently consistent with the way he had lived and the sorcery he had practiced. Stories are still told in this area of the island about the havoc, disruption, illness, and sometimes death that Severino Alpons wrought upon his rivals in life.

Not too long after his death, Severino Alpons's grandson became ill and died; most credited the young man's death to his inexperience as a sorcerer. Akilino, a former student of mine at the Wone Public Elementary School, had tried to use one of the forms of sorcery his grandfather had taught him to secure a favourable outcome for a volleyball contest in another area of the island. The young man's sorcery had been deflected by more powerful and experienced practitioners acting on behalf of the other team. For the people of Ohlapel and the larger Wone community, there were both moral and historical lessons in the sequence of events just described. The turning back of the flood waters and the fates of grandfather and grandson all reinforced the reality of sorcery as experienced, and as a link to times past when the prowess of sorcerers was greater and far more dominant than it is today.

Moving Toward the Edge and the End

I return to a more academic mode of analysis to bring this essay to its conclusion. As formal disciplines of intellectual inquiry, both history and anthropology have struggled to mediate the tension between universality and particularity in the study of others and others' pasts. The argument for a consideration of sorcery in history intensifies the struggle by challenging the interpretative exercise, an exercise made even more problematic by concerns about translation, context, and commensurability across cultural boundaries. We are dealing with areas of other cultures' historical experience where, to paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein, there are no bridgeheads of understanding, no shared space. With a topic such as sorcery, we stand at an edge beyond which our language and conceptual categories of analysis no longer serve us.

A second, equally fundamental issue of cross-cultural representation raised by a consideration of sorcery in history has to do with the various and culturally specific ways in which history is done. Marshall Sahlins has written that history is locally informed and culturally ordered.[43] I am led to add that the doing of history is also locally informed and culturally ordered. Peter Munz, in a criticism of the practice of Pacific history, defined history as Europe's culturally informed way of dealing with the past in terms of location in time and space, determinable fact, and specific categories of inquiry.[44] Munz viewed the formal discipline of history as the West's own distinctive approach to dealing with its past and something quite different from the expressions and emphases other societies might give to their pasts. Such a distinctive, particularly European approach to the past, argued Munz, could not be imposed upon others without seeming grossly arrogant and impudent. While the politics and contexts of representation have received considerable attention in these poststructural times, much of the existing criticism concerning the disciplines of history and anthropology lies firmly ensconced within a tradition of Western discourse concerned primarily with debates about the objects or subjects we make of others. There is no place for sorcery as historical experience in the tropes, linguistic protocols, theories of truth, archetypal plot structures, or strategies of ideological interpretation that Hayden White sees as characterising the deeper structure of the Western historical imagination.[45]

[43] Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago 1985), vii.

[44] Peter Munz, 'The Purity of Historical Method: Some Skeptical Reflections on the Current Enthusiasm for the History of Non-European Societies', *The New Zealand Journal of History*, 5 (1971), 17.

[45] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore 1973), 1-42.

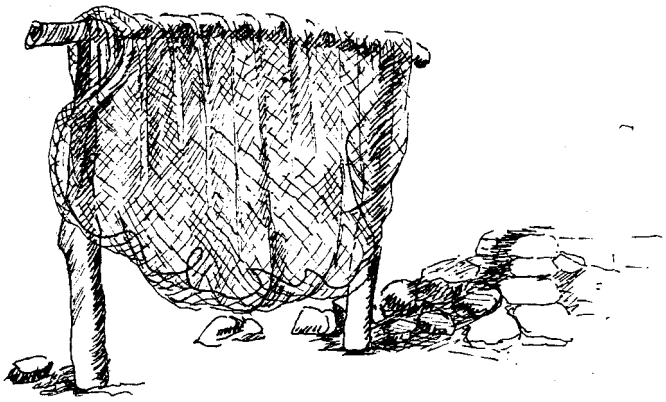
Tambiah views the dilemma of writing history or representing the past across cultural boundaries in terms of the opposition between causality and participation.[46] Tambiah defines causality as represented by categories, rules, and methods of positive science and discursive mathematics; 'logical reasoning' might be another name for it. This scientific approach, argues Tambiah, promotes a particular kind of distancing, effective neutrality and abstraction to events in the world. Euro-American historical scholarship often embodies these characteristics in its representation of others and others' pasts. Participation, on the other hand, can be represented as occurring when persons, groups, animals, places, and natural phenomena are in a relation of contiguity, and translate that relationship into one of existential immediacy and contact and shared affinities. Magic, then, for those who live in a world where it exists, is far more a question of experience than causality. And a history of this world and its people - be it written, spoken, sung, danced, or chanted - would have to acknowledge this. Hayden White writes that the grounds for choosing one perspective on history over another are ultimately aesthetic and moral rather than epistemological.[47] If White is correct, I then would opt for a perspective on history that is inclusive or considerate of sorcery.

The argument as I have attempted to construe it is not against interpretation, but focused on matters of historical experience that lie beyond Euro-American modes of analysis and interpretation. As a topic, sorcery in history takes us to the edge - that point beyond cross-cultural comparison, commensuration and interpretation where there remains nothing but to admit the uniqueness of a particular civilisation. It may be that much of what has passed for Pacific history hitherto may well be Australian, New Zealand, and American conceptions of history imposed on Pacific pasts and through received conventional categories of political, economic, social, and religious analysis. I offer the topic of magic or sorcery as but one illustration, an admittedly provocative and near-sensationalistic one, of the ways in which Pacific pasts and approaches to those pasts might be handled or figured differently. As Mary Helms has pointed out, time, space, distance, direction, change, the authority of knowledge, and the constitution of power could be other fundamental and informing categories of investigation in a more radical

[46] Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion*, 105-10.
[47] White, *Metahistory*, xii.

and ethnographic approach to the proposition that it is a worthy and important endeavour to study the past.[48] A more vernacularly tolerant, sensitive and different way of doing history in the Pacific may just be emerging. In any event, I have chosen to present these thoughts as part of a panel on ethnographic history because I think that ethnographic history gets us to the edge, and allows us a glimpse of what once was and how it might be more accurately and authentically represented.

[48] Mary Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge and Geographical Distance* (Princeton 1988). Helms takes a comparative approach across time, place, and cultures. I would favour a more particularist focus in the study of Pacific pasts.



NINE

Labour, Indenture and Historiography in the Pacific

CLIVE MOORE*

THE PORT OF MACKAY and the bountiful Pioneer valley in north Queensland had many names in the 19th century. The valley had been the home of the Juipera and 'Koinjmal Aboriginal people, decimated by disease and concerted attacks by the European settlers and the Native Police in the 1860s and 1870s;[1] It became 'sugaropolis', the largest sugar cane producing district in Australia, with the most capital invested, with the largest immigrant Melanesian labour force. My father's family lived at Walkerston, just outside Mackay. They were yeoman farmers, part of a transition which took place onwards from the 1880s, as the base of the industry was transformed from plantations to small European-owned farms supplying co-operatively-owned central mills. My parents met in Melbourne after the Second World War, where my father was working during the six-month 'slack' after the cane crushing season, in good *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*[2] style. My mother lived in elegant middle class South Yarra, daughter of a barrister who became Attorney General of Western Australia.[3] They returned to live in Mackay, providing me with a varied working and upper middle class background, and a great affinity for North Queensland, particularly the Pioneer valley.

I was always fascinated by the class contradictions of my family, and with the history of my local area. But writing the history of the district depended as much on knowledge of its Melanesian population (one-third to one-half of

* I am indebted to Mr Thanh Hoc-Truong for preparing the graphs used in this paper, to Drs Doug Munro and Ralph Shlomowitz for their comments on a draft, and to the Australian Research Council for their financial support.

1 C. Moore, 'Blackgin's Leap: a window into Aboriginal-European relations in the Pioneer valley, Queensland in the 1860s', *Aboriginal History*, 14:1-2 (1990), 61-79.

2 R. Lawler, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (Sydney 1978).

3 C. Moore, 'Robinson, Robert Thompson (1867-1926)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Melbourne 1988), 11, 426-7.

the population last century) as it did on knowing its European settlers. My interests increasingly turned towards the history of the South Sea Islanders'[4] place in the Queensland sugar industry.

In my final years at school I had hankerings to be a journalist, so I suppose I should thank the editor of the local newspaper for not taking me on as a cadet. The other career avenue led to university in Townsville. I switched from a teaching diploma to full degree studies at the end of my first year and specialised in Australian and Southeast Asian history. My undergraduate study of Southeast Asian history prepared me for ethnohistorical work in the Pacific, schooled in the works of W.F. Wertheim, Hildred and Clifford Geertz and Ben Anderson long before I had heard of Jim Davidson, Harry Maude or Dorothy Shineberg.

The History Department of James Cook University has always promoted study of regional history. I participated in a project collecting black oral history in North Queensland: Brian Dalton and Henry Reynolds encouraged Patricia Mercer and me to build on our documentary knowledge of Melanesians and the sugar industry and collect oral testimony from South Sea Islanders living north and south of Townsville. In the pursuit of this at Mackay in 1974 I met one of its most remarkable citizens, an ambulance officer, Noel Fatnowna, the grandson of indentured labourers from the Solomon Islands. There was a natural affinity between the garrulous raconteur, excessively proud of his Melanesian heritage, and the studious grandson of an Irish cane cutter.[5]

We began our interviews at an opportune time. All of the Kanakas, the original immigrant Melanesian labourers, had died; and the second and third generation were worried that their heritage was about to be lost, their children showing little interest in their own history. The older generations were willing to talk and record their history. Patricia Mercer researched the Islanders who remained into the early 20th century.[6] I followed the Malaita link, centring my research on the Fatnownas' Rakwane descent group from the Fataleka district.[7] In the process I gained a second family, in the Islands and in Queensland. My first visit to Malaita in 1976 was a revelation: immersed in the intrigues of village life with its constant round of land disputes and family

[4] They prefer to be known as South Sea Islanders, a term used last century.

[5] N. Fatnowna, *Fragments of a Lost Heritage* (Sydney 1989). Also see my obituary for Noel Fatnowna, *The Daily Mercury*, 14 Mar. 1991.

[6] P.M. Mercer, 'The Survival of a Pacific Islander population in north Queensland, 1900-1940', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1981); and, *White Australia Defied: a centennial history of Pacific Islander settlement in North Queensland* (Townsville, in press).

[7] C. Moore, I. Itea and C. Luiramo, 'A history of Fataleka, Malaita, Solomon Islands', *'O'O: a journal of Solomon Islands Studies* (in press).

feuds. Adopted by Ishmael Itea, the most powerful and knowledgeable man in Fataleka, I was able to collect information on the lives of individual labourers and to appreciate what it means to be Malaitan, a more formative influence on my writing than months in libraries reading anthropological texts.

The first year of my doctoral study was spent at La Trobe University, which gave me access to excellent Melbourne libraries and to scholars of Melanesia, but insufficient finance for research in the field, so I transferred back to James Cook University.[8] In Townsville I was isolated from other Pacific historians but I had easy access to the Queensland Islander communities and the chance to return to the Solomons. The friendship of the younger generation of South Sea Islanders enabled my education to continue in the very real world of contemporary black Australian politics and society.

I first studied the Pacific labour trade through the descendants of indentured labourers in Australia, then experienced Melanesia as a long-term visitor in the Solomon Islands, and finally as a resident of Papua New Guinea. The next stage in the making of this historian of the Pacific labour trade was six years spent teaching and researching at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby from 1981 to 1987, and travelling in Papua New Guinea. There I continued to learn more than I ever taught. My research into the labour trade grew into study of the origins of British New Guinea, in an ever widening study of colonialism in the Pacific.

Return to Australia in 1987 to a teaching position at the University of Queensland completed the circle that began in the Pioneer valley at Mackay in 1951. Serendipity sent me to Townsville and to mentors with a multidisciplinary approach and a regional vision from that 'far northern eyrie'.[9] The shaping of my personal historical vision owed less to any sense of racial injustice or political activism than to my ability to exploit the human and geographic environment of my youth, and to intellectual curiosity over what made North Queensland different. Though some credit is due to the positive politics of the Whitlam era, and a distaste for the conservative Bjelke-Petersen régime that dominated Queensland in the 1970s.

The remainder of the paper will deal with the historiography of the Queensland labour trade and the wider Pacific labour reserve, concluding with suggestions for future areas of research.

The labour trade and the Queensland sugar industry

In pointing out the isolation of Australian historical scholarship Donald Denoon noted the lack of attention paid to historical agents once they pass

[8] C. Moore, 'Kanaka Maratta: a history of Melanesian Mackay', PhD thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland (Townsville 1981).

[9] D. Denoon, 'Open and closed histories', *Australian Historical Studies*, 95 (1990), 177.

beyond the geographical boundaries of the island-continent.[10] Historians of indigenous Australia and race relations make little use of Pacific scholarship, but as Denoon also notes in a later article, 'Queensland historians are different, not only because of their regional enthusiasm, but because their topics promote comparison with other tropical dependencies'.[11]

Since the 1860s Australia's major tropical crop has been sugar cane, grown mostly within 50 kilometres of the coast, along the flat plains and in the lower river valleys of Queensland and northern New South Wales. Until the last 50 years the industry was totally labour-intensive. That labour was supplied last century by indentured labourers, around 70,000 Pacific Islanders, Asians and Europeans,[12] and in this century totally by European labourers. The first successful cane farms and plantations were established in southern Queensland in the 1860s, when the new colony was searching for an agricultural staple; the first cane was grown alongside cotton, when shortages in Europe caused by the American Civil War provided a lucrative market. But cotton production declined and it was sugar cane which became the staple crop on the agricultural frontier, moving steadily north along the coast, reaching Mossman by the 1890s.[13] The plantation regime emerged in the 1860s and matured in the early 1880s, but the industry collapsed spectacularly and was restructured during the 1890s, based on central mills and small farms.

There are several weaknesses in the way that historians have assessed the Melanesian labour trade and the sugar industry in colonial Queensland. First, Queensland had a more diverse economy than any Pacific colony, with substantial pastoral, mining, maritime and other agricultural sectors; and it was one of several interacting Australian colonies. The sugar industry was never 'the economy' in the way that it was in Fiji. Second, the accounts concentrate on Melanesian labourers, largely ignoring the more than 10,000 Chinese, Javanese, Malay, Indian, Singhalese and Japanese who also worked under indenture in several Queensland industries last century.[14] Even Saunders's monograph, which claims to be about 'unfree' labour in

[10] D. Denoon, 'The isolation of Australian history', *Historical Studies*, 87 (1986), 252-60.

[11] Denoon, 'Open and closed histories', 176-77.

[12] The total relates to the number of labour contracts, not the number of individuals involved. In the case of the around 62,000 Pacific Islanders, because of multiple enlistments the real total was probably no more than 45,000-50,000 individuals.

[13] R. Shlomowitz, 'Melanesian labour and the development of the Queensland sugar industry', *Research in Economic History: a research annual*, 7 (1984), 327-61.

[14] The number is my own estimate, drawn largely from: A. McGrath, '"Exile Into Bondage": an analysis of Asiatic indenture in colonial Queensland', BA Hons thesis, University of Queensland (St Lucia 1976); R. Evans, K. Saunders and K. Cronin, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: a history of exclusion, exploitation and extermination* (St Lucia 1988).

Queensland, beginning with convicts in 1824 and going on to the 'White' sugar industry in 1916, gives short shrift to Asian workers.[15]

Third, most major studies[16] have been colony-wide, drawing their information from fragments garnered from a variety of documentary sources covering several decades. In some studies unity is provided by borrowed theoretical concerns that largely fail as adequate explanatory tools in the Queensland case. Their historical reconstruction is accomplished by selective use of colony-wide evidence. At risk of encouraging a Queensland epidemic of 'monograph myopia', much more detailed regional research is needed into Melanesian labour in 19th century Queensland. Each cane growing district varied in character, depending on when it was established and the wider economy of the local district. The Rockhampton sugar industry, for instance, was small and important only in the 1890s, but Islanders worked in that district from 1867, mainly in the pastoral industry. As a consequence the South Sea Islander community there today is totally different in character from that in sugar regions like Mackay or Ayr and Homehill.

Fourth, the Pacific labour trade was not directly comparable to the African slave trade. Though much of the non-academic literature on the Queensland labour trade still equates indenture with slavery, the labourers did not inhabit a slave society equivalent to the Caribbean or the American South. As it existed in the West Indies, South Africa and Mauritius until 1833, and in 15 southern states of the USA until the Civil War of 1861-65, slavery was a life-long legal status and transmitted to every child of a female slave. The person of the slave was the property of his or her owner, capable of being sold, bequeathed, given as a gift, mortgaged or hired; but incapable of entering into any contract, owning property or giving evidence in court.

Contracts of indenture under Masters and Servants Acts were widely used in British colonies in the post-slavery era to control plantation and pastoral labour forces, and stabilise the workforce by preventing a high turnover. In the Australasian colonies they were used to employ all racial groups, including Europeans.[17] There are fundamental differences between indenture and slavery. The indenture agreements contained penal sanction provisions which were used to bind the employee, as well as provisions to protect him or her from predatory employers. Agreements were legally void if the law was

[15] K. Saunders, *Workers in Bondage: the origins and bases of unfree labour in Queensland, 1824-1916* (St Lucia 1982).

[16] P. Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation: a history of Solomon Islands labour migration, 1870-1914* (Melbourne 1973); Saunders, *Workers in Bondage*; A.A. Graves, 'Pacific Island Labour and the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1862-1906', DPhil thesis, Oxford University (Oxford 1979).

[17] K. Buckley and T. Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers: capitalism and the common people in Australia, 1788-1914* (Melbourne 1988), 67-70, 255.

satisfied that they were not entered into voluntarily. Indentured labourers were often exploited, but any analogy with slavery can only be metaphorical.[18]

Fifth, South Sea Islanders have been too often treated as circular-migrants in the second half of the 19th century, not a successful Australian immigrant community of six generations over a century and a quarter. Most studies begin in the 1860s and cut off in the mid-1900s, giving the appearance of a neat 40-year plantation-dominated era, into which a Melanesian labour supply arrived and departed. We need to know more about their lives back in the islands, and about the significant period from the 1900s until the present day.[19]

Sixth, the testimony of the Islanders themselves has been virtually ignored as a source of information on the Queensland labour trade. Historians persisted in seeking explanations exclusively from documentary sources at a time when the original Kanaka generation was still alive. The use which Peter Corris and Malama Meleisea[20] were able to make of oral testimony from elderly labour recruits indicates what might have been possible if this source had been tapped earlier. Oral testimony from their children and grandchildren in Australia and the Solomon Islands has enlarged understanding of the recruiting process and immigrant Melanesian society in Australia. And there is also a recent small but influential body of writing by descendants of Queensland's Kanakas, which provides a truly Melanesian, but largely idealised, view of the labour trade.[21]

Seventh, all writing on the Queensland labour trade before the cliometric work of Ralph Shlomowitz failed to appreciate the importance of time-expired

[18] Moore, *Kanaka*, 153-4.

[19] My *Kanaka* extends to the 1920s, but the crucial works are Mercer, 'The Survival of a Pacific Islander Population' and *White Australia Defied*. Also refer to P.M. Mercer and C.R. Moore, 'Melanesians in North Queensland: the retention of indigenous religious and magical practices', *Journal of Pacific History*, 11 (1976), 66-88; and, 'Australia's Pacific Islanders, 1906-1977', *Journal of Pacific History*, 13 (1978), 90-101; and C.R. Moore and P.M. Mercer, 'The forgotten Immigrants: Australia's South Sea Islanders, 1906-1991', in H. Reynolds (ed.), *Race and Ethnic Relations in North Queensland* (in preparation).

[20] Corris provided a summary of the lives of 17 Solomon Island labour recruits to Queensland and Fiji in *Passage, Port and Plantation*, 151-54. Also refer to M. Meleisea, *O Tama Uli: Melanesians in Western Samoa* (Suva 1980).

[21] F. Bandler, *Wacvie* (Adelaide 1977); *Marani in Australia* (Adelaide 1980); *Welou, My Brother* (Glebe 1984); N. Fatnowna, *Fragments of a Lost Heritage*, R.M. Keesing, ed. (Sydney 1989); C. Moore (ed.), *The Forgotten People: a history of the Australian South Sea Island community* (Sydney 1979).

and ticket-holding Melanesians.[22] Shlomowitz's research suggests that the 1880s were as pivotal to the Melanesian work-force as they were for the Queensland sugar industry as a whole. From the 1880s the time-expired and ticket-holding Islanders dominated the Melanesian community. They were increasingly mobile, able to negotiate with employers, and fared well in dealings with the colonial legal system. This group, 40 to 60% of all Melanesians in Queensland from the mid-1880s until the mid-1900s, and totally dominant in the early 20th century, became a Melanesian segment of the general colonial working class, separate from the indentured servant category. They are best thought of as an immigrant ethnic group within Australian society, not as an historical curiosity belonging to a 'plantation era'.

In crude quantitative terms, since 1906 more than 240 books, chapters, articles, documents and contemporary accounts have been published dealing with the Queensland labour trade and the descendants of the Kanakas. This extensive literature has led the Melanesian work-force to dominate our thinking on indenture in Queensland; and Queensland's Melanesian labour trade to dominate thinking on the nature of labour migration in the South Pacific, when in fact it is atypical.[23]

Statistics versus literary research

The British experience in Queensland is only part of the larger story of Pacific labour migration. Approximately one and a half million Islanders and half a million Asians engaged in wage labour in colonies throughout the South Pacific before 1945. Scholars have generally taken the available data on labour employment in the South Pacific at face value, but much of it is underestimated, incomplete and unreliable. There is also the question of whom to include?

We should be addressing the mobilisation of the total colonial labour reserve, from sailors to mission teachers; but the 19th century statistics too

[22] R. Shlomowitz, 'The search for institutional equilibrium in Queensland's sugar industry, 1884-1913', *Australian Economic History Review*, 19:2 (1979), 91-122; 'Markets for indentured and time-expired Melanesian labour in Queensland, 1863-1906: an economic analysis', *Journal of Pacific History*, 16 (1981), 70-9; 'The profitability of indentured Melanesian labour in Queensland', *Australian Economic History Review*, 22 (1982), 49-67; 'Melanesian labour and the development of the Queensland sugar industry', *Research in Economic History: a research annual*, 7 (1982), 327-61; 'Time-expired Melanesian Labor in Queensland: an investigation of job Turnover, 1884-1906', *Pacific Studies*, 8:2 (1985), 25-44; 'Time-expired Melanesian labour in Queensland: the measurement of job turnover, 1886-1906', *Journal of Pacific History*, 20 (1985), 55-6.

[23] For further detail see C. Moore, 'Revising the revisionists: the historiography of immigrant Melanesians in Australia', *Pacific Studies*, 15:2 (1992), 61-86.

often concentrate on indentured labourers. There is no clear break between indenture and modern wage labour, though generally indenture was the dominant method of employment on plantations and mines from the 1840s up until the Second World War. The statistics also ignore the thousands of Islanders onwards from the 18th century who worked in exchange for goods rather than cash. And it is difficult to take into account wives and families who worked to sustain village economies, in effect subsidising the colonial economies, while sons and husbands went away to work as labourers, on bachelor wages.

There is still no detailed statistical overview of indenture or wider labour mobilisation in the South Pacific. Research needs to be done to retrieve the raw statistics and to subject them to systematic analysis in the manner pioneered for Pacific history by demographers like Charles Price and Norma McArthur, and economic historian Ralph Shlomowitz. Doug Munro has recently provided an invaluable short analysis of the statistics on the origins of labourers in the Introduction to *Labour in the South Pacific*.[24] In 17 tables with 80 entries he has gone far beyond the earlier overviews by Colin Newbury[25] and Ralph Shlomowitz. The graphs used in this paper have been drawn largely from Munro's compilation. There are still annoying gaps in the statistics, and we know that they only give the lower limit of the most regulated section of the work-force. But for the first time we can see at a glance the general proportions of the different types of labour involved.

The remainder of the paper will focus on the statistics and literature on indentured labour migration to Papua New Guinea, Hawaii, Fiji, New Caledonia and Samoa up until the Second World War. The conclusion recommends three areas for future research: further investigation of the nature of the recruiting process; the place of Asian migrants in the wider labour mobilisation; and the compilation of an extensive statistical base applicable to detailed study of the labour reserve and the development of colonialism in the Pacific.

Indentured Labour Migration in the South Pacific, 1848-1941

The Pacific labour reserve was tapped in roughly the same geographic and chronological order as European influence spread through the Pacific Islands. Capitalist plantation and mining enterprises required a cheap and regulated labour supply: beginning in Polynesia, then moving north through Melanesia,

[24] D. Munro, 'The Origins of Labourers in the South Pacific: commentary and statistics', in C. Moore, J. Leckie and D. Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific* (Townsville 1990), xxxix-li. Munro intends to expand this in a companion volume.

[25] C.W. Newbury, 'The Melanesian labor reserve: some reflections on Pacific labor markets in the nineteenth century', *Pacific Studies*, 4:1 (1980), 1-25.

the labour trade preceded colonial partition. Over time it changed from an external to an internal colonial movement of labour. The final expansion of the labour frontier into virgin territory, through the New Guinea Highlands in the 1950s, is well within living memory. There is an enormous body of writing on labour migration in the South Pacific, varying from 19th century contemporary descriptions to accounts by administrators, missionaries and traders, and 20th century academic studies by geographers, anthropologists and historians.[26]

Many of these labourers were bound by contracts of indenture, a category not abolished in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Ocean Island and Nauru until the 1950s. Indenture was used to mobilise and regulate the indigenous, Asian and European work-force in the Pacific Islands and the Australasian colonies from the 19th century to the early 20th century. Frontier capitalism needed a cheap and regular supply of indentured labour for its success. The accompanying graph shows the approximate proportional sizes of indentured labour migrations externally and internally in eight major Pacific colonies[27] between 1848 and 1941. The two most obvious discrepancies between the statistics and the literature are the relative neglect of study of Papua New Guinea, and the inflated importance of Samoa in relation to the size of its labour force. One less obvious discrepancy is the neglect of Vanuatu in the literature, which does no justice to the extent to which New Hebrideans worked internally and in other Pacific colonies.

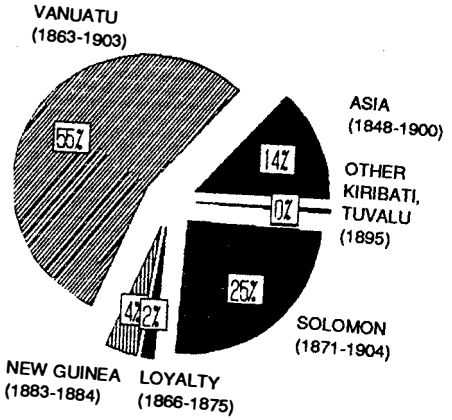
Papua New Guinea

The figures for Papua New Guinea are the highest. Munro's statistics account for 58% of the indentured labour migration before 1941: 649,231 labourers, all indigenous aside from about 4,364 Asians and 115 Micronesians in German New Guinea. But by limiting the count to indentured labour we exclude casual labour hirings in all periods (around 15,000 in German New Guinea alone), non-indentured Asian labour in German New Guinea (about 2,000), and the over 100,000 who worked under agreement in the Highlands Labour Scheme, 1950 to 1974. Also excluded are the more than 20,000 indentured and casual labourers employed each year in German New Guinea

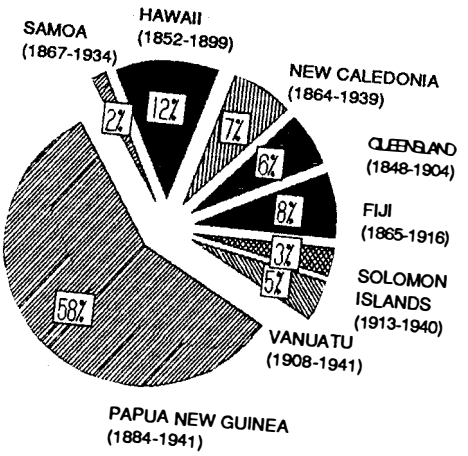
[26] R.J. May (ed.), *Change and Movement: readings on internal migration in Papua New Guinea* (Canberra 1977); M. Chapman and R.M. Prothero (eds), *Circulation in Population Movement: substance and concepts from the Melanesian case* (London 1985); M. Chapman (ed.), *Mobility and Identity in the Island Pacific: Special Issue of Pacific Viewpoint*, 26:1 (1985); J. Connell (ed.), *Migration and Development in the South Pacific* (Canberra 1990); Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*.

[27] This term is being used loosely. Queensland became an Australian state and Hawaii an American state during the period under discussion.

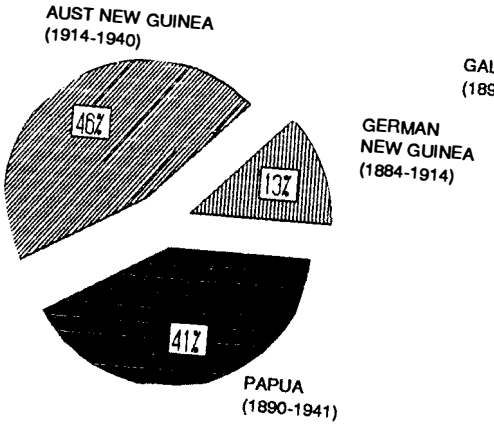
QUEENSLAND
1848-1904



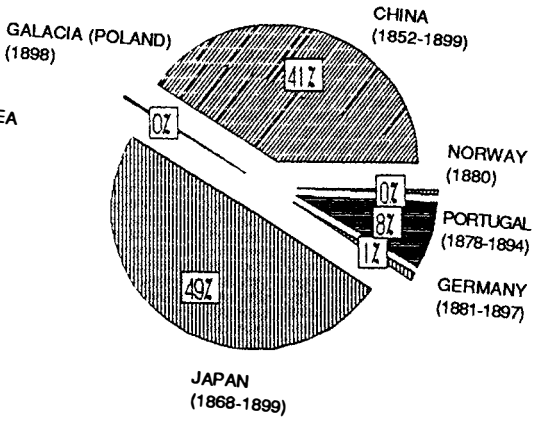
INDENTURED LABOUR MIGRATION
EIGHT MAJOR PACIFIC COLONIES 1848-1941



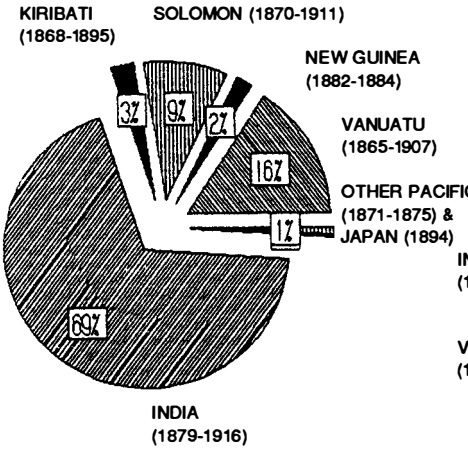
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
1884-1941



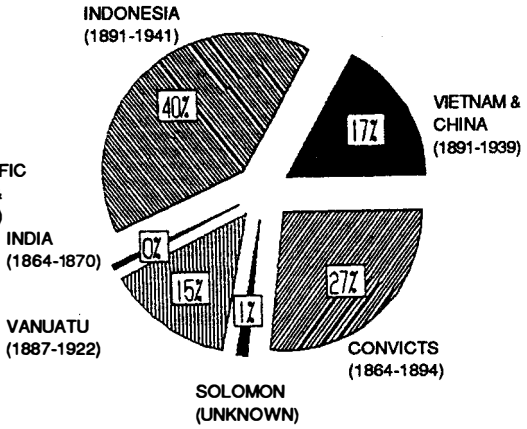
HAWAII
1852-1899



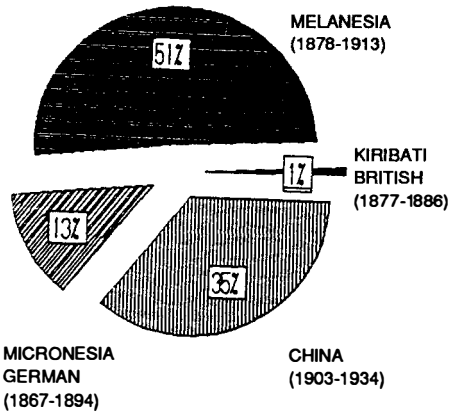
FIJI
1865-1916



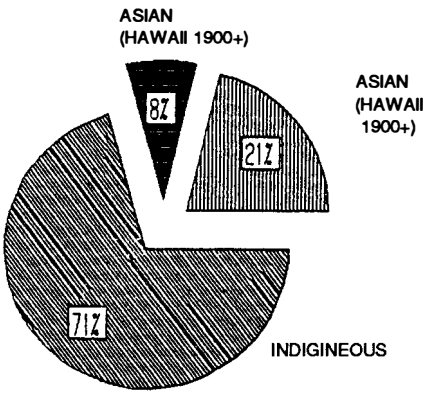
NEW CALEDONIA
1864-1941



SAMOA
1867 - 1934



ASIAN LABOUR MIGRATION AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL PACIFIC LABOUR MIGRATION 1848-1941



Sources: for all graphs, Munro, 'The origins of Labourers'; for Queensland, also McGrath, '"Exile into Bondage"', and Saunders, *Workers in Bondage*.

under Australian military rule, and a smaller but still significant number in Papua, 1914-20.[28] Neither do we have any exact figures on the number of Islanders employed by the Japanese and the Allies in Papua New Guinea (and elsewhere in the Pacific) during the Second World War. The Allies employed 8,500 in the armed forces and the police, and about 55,000 New Guineans as labourers each year at the height of recruiting. But the extent of 'unofficial' work for the Allies is unknown, as is the total number employed by the Japanese.[29] The total employed in labouring occupations up to 1945 must have been closer to one million.

There is no single history of wage labour in Papua New Guinea, as most studies deal with the various colonial territories and avoid the complexity of the whole. My chapter on workers in Papua New Guinea in *Labour in the South Pacific* is the first overview of the colonial period, 1884 to 1975. Charles Rowley's *The New Guinea Villager* is still the best evocation of colonial social change at village level,[30] but there is a dearth of detailed studies on labour mobilisation in this crucial Pacific nation. Nevertheless the size, time-span and complexity of the labour mobilisation has encouraged theorising about the nature of proletarianisation and class formation in Melanesia. In the 1970s several University of Papua New Guinea academics made contributions to the debate, but their work is more reliable for the post-1945 period than earlier.[31] The other important theoretical contribution is Richard Curtain's development of Michael Burawoy's concept of dual dependence, based on a comparative model of migrant labour systems from southern Africa and the

[28] C.D. Rowley, *The Australians in German New Guinea, 1914-1921* (Melbourne 1958), 162.

[29] J. Griffin, H. Nelson and S. Firth, *Papua New Guinea: a political history* (Melbourne 1979), 91-8; F.J. West, 'Indigenous labour in Papua-New Guinea', *International labour Review*, 77:2 (1958), 95-6.

[30] C.D. Rowley, *The New Guinea Villager: a retrospect from 1964* (Melbourne 1965). Also refer to R. Lacey, *'Our Young Men Snatched Away': labourers in Papua New Guinea's colonial economy, 1884-1942*, Occasional Paper in Economic History No 3, History Department, University of Papua New Guinea (Boroko 1983).

[31] A. Amarshi, K. Good and R. Mortimer, *Development and Dependency: the political economy of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne 1979); K. Good, *Papua New Guinea: a false economy* (London 1986); P. Fitzpatrick, *Law and State in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney 1980); idem, '"Really Rather Like Slavery": law and labour in the colonial economy in Papua New Guinea', in E.L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Vol. 3, (Sydney 1978); idem, 'The Creation and Containment of the Papua New Guinea Peasantry', in E.L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Vol. 4, (Sydney 1980); M. Donaldson, 'Class formation in Papua New Guinea: the indigenous bourgeoisie', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, 7 (1980) 63-85.

United States, examining the links between village economies and the colonial state.[32]

Hawaii

Munro's figures for Hawaii are the second highest, 396,007 labourers between 1852 and 1929; but these are inflated by 20th century figures for immigration, not just immigration of indentured labour, and include families as well as workers. Before the enactment of the *Organic Act* in 1900, which abolished the institution of indenture in Hawaii, there were about 150,000 labourers, 12% of the indentured labour force in the South Pacific: 56,720 Chinese, 68,427 Japanese, 13,316 Europeans; and several thousand Hawaiians who were the main labour force in the sugar industry from its beginning in 1835 until 1876, when a Treaty of Reciprocity removed trade barriers between the USA and the Kingdom of Hawaii, enabling the industry to flourish and import the broadest range of labour in any Pacific colony.[33]

Edward Beechert's 1985 labour history of Hawaii gives the best overall account of the enormous changes that have occurred, while Ronald Takaki's *Pau Hana* concentrates on plantation labour from 1835 to 1920.[34] Both are informed by a Marxist intellectual tradition but neither provides a satisfactory analysis of the dynamics of the mixed labour force. Takaki falls into the same trap as Adrian Graves does for Queensland, in overestimating proletarianisation in the 19th century.[35] There is also a growing body of literature on the Asian immigrants, particularly the Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos who remain dominant groups in the Hawaiian population.[36]

Fiji

Inter-race relations are the all-pervading dynamic of Fiji, but sugar created a lopsided economy which has the effect of concentrating historical investigation on one industry and one racial group, to the disadvantage of a more complete

[32] R. Curtain, 'Dual Dependence and Sepik Labour Migration', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 19800; 'The structure of internal migration in Papua New Guinea', *Pacific Viewpoint*, 21 (1980), 42-61; 'The migrant labour system and class formation in Papua New Guinea', *South Pacific Forum*, 1:1 (1984), 117-41.

[33] M. Willson, C. Moore and D. Munro, 'Asian Workers in the Pacific', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 80.

[34] E.D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: a labor history* (Honolulu 1985); R. Takaki, *Pau Hana: plantation life and labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu 1983).

[35] A. Graves, 'Colonialism and indentured labour migration in the Western Pacific, 1840-1915'; 'The nature and origins of Pacific Islands labour migration to Queensland, 1863-1906', in S. Marks and P. Richardson (eds), *International Labour Migration: historical perspectives* (London 1984), 112-39.

[36] E.C. Nordyke, *The Peopling of Hawai'i* (Honolulu 1989).

assessment. Munro lists 88,297 labourers employed in Fiji before 1916, only 8% of the Pacific total. A quarter were from Melanesia: 14,198 from the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), 8,228 from the Solomon Islands, 1,618 from the eastern islands of New Guinea; 2,398 from the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati); plus a few hundred from other Pacific Islands and Japan. The overwhelming majority, 60,965 or 69%, were from India.

There is no general history of labour in colonial Fiji, and the most comprehensive studies concentrate on the *girmitiyas*, the Indian indentured labourers, and sugar industry labourers generally. The Canberra school, particularly through Deryck Scarr,[37] has given Fiji a greater influence in the literature than it proportionally deserves. Little attention has been paid to the role of indigenous workers, on the cotton and sugar plantations of the 1860s and 1870s,[38] and in agricultural and mining ventures decades after Indian indenture ended; though Simione Duratalo's and 'Atu Bain's theses partially redress this.[39] Ken Gillion's 1962 monograph on Indian indentured labour to 1920 remains unrivalled, supplemented by the work of Brij Lal on the origins of the labourers and their plantation experience.[40]

New Caledonia

Revisionist writing on the labour trade began with Dorothy Shineberg's study of the sandalwood trade around the New Hebrides, the Loyalty Islands and New Caledonia.[41] Shineberg presented the Islanders as active agents in the sandalwood trade, a theme developed separately for the British Pacific by Scarr and Peter Corris. Shineberg's research into labour in the French Pacific has continued,[42] but it is fair to say that apart from Colin Newbury's major

[37] D. Scarr, *Fragments of Empire: a history of the Western Pacific High Commission, 1877-1914* (Canberra 1967); W.E. Giles, *A Cruise in a Queensland Labour Vessel to the South Seas*, D. Scarr, ed. (Canberra 1968).

[38] J. Narayan, *The Political Economy of Fiji* (Suva 1984), 23 suggests that several thousand Fijians were employed by foreigners before 1874. Also refer to J. Young, *Adventurous Spirits: Australian migrant society in pre-cession Fiji* (St Lucia 1984).

[39] S. Durutalo, 'Internal Colonialism and Unequal Development: the case of the Western United Front and the pine industry in Fiji', MA thesis, University of the South Pacific (Suva 1985); 'A. Bain, 'Vatukoula - Rock of Gold: labour in the goldmining industry of Fiji, 1930-1970', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1986).

[40] K.L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants: a history to the end of indenture in 1920* (Melbourne 1962); also refer to K.L. Gillion, *The Fiji Indians: challenge to European dominance, 1920-1946* (Canberra 1970); B.V. Lal, *Girmitiyas: the origins of the Fiji Indians* (Canberra 1983).

[41] D. Shineberg, *They Came For Sandalwood: a study of the sandalwood trade in the south-west Pacific, 1830-1865* (Melbourne 1967).

[42] D. Shineberg, '"Noumea no good. Noumea no pay": "New Hebridean" indentured labour in New Caledonia, 1865-1925', *Journal of Pacific History*, 26 (1991), 187-205.

study of French Polynesia and Kerry Howe's and Bronwyn Douglas's work on New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, the French Pacific was never really part of the general thrust of Pacific historiography.[43]

Use of bonded labour never loomed large statistically in New Caledonia: even including around 22,000 convicts with the 60,376 imported Asian and Islander labourers, the figure is only 7% of the Pacific total. But these were supplemented by an indigenous labour force, mobilised in early decades of contact in the whaling, sandalwood and bêche-de-mer trades, and in the colonial era through the *Régime de l'Indigénat*.[44] As a settler colony with a European, Asian and indigenous labour force it can be compared with Queensland and Hawaii. New Caledonia is remarkable for the degree of state involvement in the recruiting process and for the extent of compulsory labour but little of the English language writing comes to terms with the *Régime de l'Indigénat*. French language scholarship continues to have little effect on English language studies of the labour reserve.[45]

Samoa

There is a substantial English language literature on the 19,694 immigrant plantation labourers who went to Samoa, only 2% of the Pacific total. Much of it comes from Stewart Firth and Doug Munro, whose specialisations in German New Guinea[46] and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorates,[47] the sources of the majority of the labourers, have led to increasingly detailed studies of the migrations, and the wider ramifications of the role of the labour

[43] C. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: change and survival in French Polynesia, 1767-1945* (Honolulu 1980); K.R. Howe, *The Loyalty Islands: a history of culture contacts, 1840-1900* (Canberra 1977); B.P. Douglas, 'A History of Culture Contact in North-eastern New Caledonia, 1774-1870', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1972); and 'The export trade in tropical products in New Caledonia, 1841-1872', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 27 (1971), 157-69. Also refer to *Journal of Pacific History*, 26:2 (1991), Special Issue: France in the Pacific: past, present and future.

[44] D. Winslow, 'Workers in Colonial New Caledonia to 1945', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 108-121; and 'Labour relations in New Caledonia to 1945', *South Pacific Forum*, 3:1 (1986), 97-112; J. Connell, *Migration, Employment and Development in the South Pacific. Country Report No. 10: New Caledonia* (Noumea 1985).

[45] Winslow, 'Workers in colonial New Caledonia', 120-1.

[46] S.G. Firth, *New Guinea Under the Germans* (Melbourne 1982); 'The transformation of the labour trade in German New Guinea, 1899-1914', *Journal of Pacific History*, 11 (1976) 51-65.

[47] D. Munro and S.G. Firth, 'Towards colonial protectorates: the case of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 32:1 (1986), 63-71.

reserve in the colonial partition of the Pacific.[48] There are now also several studies on Chinese labourers in Samoa,[49] the work of Barrie Macdonald on Gilbert and Ellice Islands labour migration, and that of Meleisea on Melanesian labourers in Samoa.[50]

The Samoan labour trade was insignificant in comparison with that of Papua New Guinea or Hawaii, but German colonialism in Samoa was a financial success, maintaining the Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellscaft der Südsee-Inseln zu Hamburg, and politically holding an important place in the German Pacific. Samoa provides a fascinating comparison with Queensland and Fiji, where employment of indentured labour was quite regulated from the early 1870s. In Samoa there were no regulations until 1897. The scholarship is basically empirical, emanating from Australia and New Zealand and allied to the Canberra school. But contrary to the literature on Queensland and Fiji, the Samoan studies concentrate on the role of the state rather than on the plantation experience. There is no matching literature in German, though English language scholars such as Firth and Hempenstall[51] have used German archival sources extensively.

Conclusion

The two million Pacific Islanders and Asians participating in the Pacific labour trade are only a very small proportion of the 510 million individuals involved

[48] D. Munro and S. Firth, 'Company Strategies - Colonial Policies', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 3-29; and 'From company rule to consular control: Gilbert Island labourers on German plantations in Samoa, 1867-96', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 16:1 (1987), 24-44; 'German labour policy and the partition of the Western Pacific: the view from Samoa', *Journal of Pacific History*, 25 (1990), 85-102; S.G. Firth and D. Munro, 'Compagnie et consulat: lois germaniques et emploi des travailleurs sur les plantations de Samoa, 1864-1914', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 91 (1990), 115-34; D. Munro, 'Planter versus protector: Frank Cornwall's employment of Gilbertese plantation workers in Samoa, 1877-1881', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 23 (1989), 173-82.

[49] J.A. Moses, 'The coolie labour question and German colonial policy in Samoa, 1900-1914', *Journal of Pacific History*, 8 (1973), 101-24; S.G. Firth, 'Governors versus settlers: the dispute over Chinese labour in German Samoa', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 11 (1977), 155-179; D.R. Haynes, 'Chinese Indentured Labour in Western Samoa, 1900-1950', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington (Wellington, 1965); P.S. O'Connor, 'The problem of indentured labour in Samoa under the military administration', *Political Science*, 20:2 (1969), 10-27; N.Y.W. Tom, *The Chinese in Western Samoa, 1875-1985* (Apia 1986).

[50] B.K. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire: towards a history of Kiribati and Tuvalu* (Canberra 1982), particularly pp.54-74; M. Meleisea, *O Tama Uli*, and 'The last days of the Melanesian labour trade in Western Samoa', *Journal of Pacific History*, 11 (1976), 126-32.

[51] P.J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule: a study in the meaning of colonial resistance* (Canberra 1978); and P.J. Hempenstall and N. Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent in the South Pacific* (Suva 1984).

in the inter-colonial flows of labour during the hundred years from 1850. As Doug Munro reminds us:

> Compared with Africa, Asia and the Americas, the Pacific has always been the marginalized backwater of non-European studies, and an important reason for the Pacific Islands being regarded from the outside as a historiographic wasteland lies in their smallness of scale being equated with intrinsic unimportance.[52]

We need to see the movement of labour in the Pacific as part of a world-wide mobilisation, noting similarities in relationships between metropolitan capitalism, colonial commercial enterprises and labour forces in other peripheral areas. But the isolation from larger events and the indigenous societies involved, each replete in its island world, also enables intensive study of how the culture of capitalism was incorporated into the Islanders' cosmology.[53] Their participation in organised labour migration is crucial to our understanding of their colonial experience: as individual labourers, as part of predominantly male communities at plantations and mines, and back in their villages. We also need to study the experiences of those who remained in the villages, particularly women who seldom sold their labour but worked to maintain subsistence production and exchange obligations in the absence of their menfolk.

The Recruiting Process

The actual recruiting process is the cutting edge of the labour mobilisation. The literature is vast and influential, given that study of the labour trade was important in framing the revisionist Island/Islander-centred Pacific history of the 1960s and 1970s. But most of this scholarship has been of British colonies, particularly Queensland and Fiji, and influenced by the traditions of British scholarship.

Older scholarship, in the work of John Ward, W.P. Morrell and O.W. Parnaby,[54] dealt only with the early labour trade, as part of imperial history and limited to the development of legislative and government processes to control the methods of recruitment, showing little interest in the plantation

[52] D. Munro, 'The Pacific Islands Labor Trade: approaches, methodologies, debates', paper presented to the Inter-University Seminar on Working Class History, Atlanta, Georgia, Oct. 1991, 2.

[53] M.D. Sahlins, 'Cosmologies of capitalism: the trans-Pacific sector of "the World System"', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74 (1988), 1-51; N. Thomas, *Entangled Objects: exchange, material culture and colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass. 1991).

[54] J.M. Ward, *British Policy in the South Pacific, 1783-1893: a study in the British policy towards the South Pacific islands prior to the establishment of governments by the great powers* (Sydney 1948); W.P. Morell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford 1960); O.W. Parnaby, *Britain and the Labor Trade in the Southwest Pacific* (Durham 1964).

experience, beyond the legal framework. Newer scholarship placed emphasis on Islander-oriented history and the plantation experience, influenced by the post-war decolonisation of the Pacific Islands, ethnohistorical research techniques and concurrent interest in social history world-wide. Shineberg, Scarr and Corris were in this first revisionist generation, followed by Saunders, Firth, Munro, Meleisea, Graves, Lal, Mercer and Moore among others. However, there never was a coherent revisionist school of thought even among academic historians.[55]

The main debate still concerns the degree to which enlistment was voluntary. The early academic accounts and most popular accounts of 'Blackbirding' continue to depict rampant kidnapping, but 'revisionist' historians showed the labour trade to have assumed the character of a high-risk and dangerous business, though involving a substantial degree of consent from all involved. Historians of the British Pacific now accept that the first 10 years of labour recruiting in any area were dominated by kidnapping, but the focus of their research has moved to the much larger period of voluntary enlistment.

The kidnapping thesis has been applied to the extension of the Queensland labour trade to New Guinea waters in the 1880s. But recent research has shown that the New Guinea Islanders had considerable prior knowledge of the labour recruiting process; and that the findings of the Queensland government investigations into kidnapping were controlled by a political agenda.[56] The report of the Royal Commission into recruiting in New Guinea waters has been used extensively by historians of the labour trade, who have paraphrased its conclusions but never before subjected it to detailed analysis.

Careful sifting of similar evidence on kidnapping in southern Melanesia may well find that the accepted notion of a first decade of recruiting being carried on by illegal means is an exaggeration. A fuller appreciation of the extent of whaling, sandalwood, bêche-de-mer, government, naval and missionary contacts may sit uncomfortably with the scattered evidence on kidnapping. Though one would be wise to note Michel Panoff's expression of doubt, that conclusions based on the relatively benign British labour trade have been erroneously extended to characterise labour recruiting in the German Pacific.[57] This argument could also be extended to the French Pacific, where labour was coerced and unregulated in a much later period.

[55] Moore, 'Revising the revisionists'.

[56] B. Jamison, 'Blackbirding in New Guinea waters? The 1884 voyage of the *Hopeful* and the Queensland labour trade', BA Hons thesis, University of Queensland (St Lucia 1990).

[57] M. Panoff, 'Travailleurs, recruteurs et planteurs dans l'Archipel Bismarck de 1885 à 1914', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 64 (1979), 159-73. See also S.G. Firth, 'The transformation of the labour trade'.

Asian Indenture

The biggest weakness in the literature on labour migration concerns Asian labour. Approximately 489,500 Asians were brought to the South Pacific over 100 years from the 1840s. Even if this number were reduced to include only indentured labour, excluding 131,270 Asians who arrived in Hawaii after 1900, it is still 30% of the total indentured work-force in the South Pacific.[58] In Hawaii and Fiji the descendants of Asian labourers are still a significant proportion of the population and have been well represented in the historical literature. Quite the opposite is true of Asians in Queensland. The more than 10,000 Asians who were employed as indentured labourers during the final 40 years of the 19th century are seldom considered. Although the analysis of indenture in Queensland is more voluminous and sophisticated than anywhere else in the Pacific, it has concentrated almost entirely on the Melanesian labourers, ignoring the Asian 15% of the indentured work-force, and the dynamics of inter-racial relations in the pastoral, sugar, mining and maritime industries.

Colonial Labour Statistics and Analysis of Pacific Societies

In the conclusion to *Labour in the South Pacific* Jacqueline Leckie noted that throughout debates about modes of production there was an 'apparent irreconcilable rift between those who emphasise material forces or cultural forces in the process of historical change':

> Where we may find disagreement among ourselves is over the question of human agency, the social and cultural incorporation of peripheral areas of the world system and the way we interpret this.[59]

What remained central though often ignored in the ideological and interpretative debate was the 'people who labour'.

It is not difficult to write of the development of classes and class consciousness in contemporary Papua New Guinea and Fiji. There is an entrenched bureaucratic and political élite largely created in the colonial period, a landless urban working class, and a growing urban middle class that is obvious to even a casual observer. It is more difficult to apply class terminology to the plantation and mine work-force in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Graves bravely argues that an obvious proletarianisation of Melanesia occurred in the second half of the 19th century, with an increasing

[58] M. Willson, C. Moore and D. Munro, 'Asian Workers in the Pacific', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 78-107.

[59] J. Leckie, 'The Development of Class Analysis', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 250.

dependence on sale of labour as a regular part of subsistence, but his evidence from the islands is too thin to sustain his conclusion.[60]

Far more profitable is the development of data bases from colonial statistics which provide adequate evidence on which to build conjecture. Ralph Shlomowitz's detailed quantitative analysis of Queensland data shows the diverse categories of workers emerging from an amorphous mass of indentured labour. And analysis of criminal justice statistics from Queensland suggests that the process of proletarianisation was beginning by the 1890s but truncated by the mass deportation policies of the Australian government in the 1900s.[61] Similar evidence exists in government and company files for other Pacific colonies. Use of quantitative data can remove much of the guesswork from historical analysis. While we must be careful that the available empirical data does not totally shape our intellectual exploration, nevertheless its use seems the most fruitful and necessary step in establishing the place of labour mobilisation in social change in the South Pacific.

[60] A. Graves, 'Colonialism and indentured labour migration'; and, 'The nature and origins of Pacific Islands labour migration to Queensland'; C.R. Moore, Review of *International Labour Migration*, *Historical Studies*, 22 (89) (1987), 656-8.

[61] M. Finnane and C. Moore, 'Kanaka Slaves or Willing Workers?: time-expired Melanesian workers and the Queensland criminal justice system in the 1890s', *Criminal Justice History: an international annual*, 13 (1992), in press.

TEN

The Long, Slow Haul: Issues in 20th Century Pacific Labour Historiography

JACQUELINE LECKIE

THE STUDY OF the history of working people, labour relations, labour institutions and simply work and production is now well-established. Like many sub-disciplines there has been considerable debate about whether such a separate focus is necessary, and what its parameters and contents are. Labour historiography traces its official roots to the industrial revolution, but labour history research now reaches into centuries long before industrialisation and into regions of the world which do not neatly fit into the model of the industrialised West, including the Pacific region, although until recently the Pacific did not command the same attention as in Africa.[1] This paper will comment on several reasons for this, as well as discussing some of the theoretical and methodological issues that emergent Pacific labour historiography is raising. But first, some personal confessions.

As a student in the early 1970s I passionately wanted to understand why there was so much conflict, injustice and inequality in the world. My own background confused and angered me - my parents had tough lives as working people and little materially to show for this. I was equally aware of what seemed to me to be bigotry and irrational prejudices against women and people of other cultures.

In my quest for the meaning of life I became fascinated with other societies and philosophies. This took me to history and anthropology, but the latter discipline became frustratingly esoteric and navel-gazing, while any whiff of idealism or saving the world was tabu in those relativistic days! Instead I was converted to social, economic and political history. Still committed to understanding prejudice and writing history from the 'bottom up', I embarked

[1] See B. Freund, 'Labour and labour history in Africa', *African Studies Review*, 27: 2 (1984); B. Freund, *The African Worker* (Cambridge 1988).

on a world-wide odyssey in search of the history of the Gujaratis, who were part of the early working class of New Zealand. Fieldwork in India whetted my taste for living in other cultures but also brought home the realities of combining historical and anthropological methodologies. I shared several experiences with Gujarati families and tried to be as 'participatory' and unbiased as possible. It was not until I returned to Gujarat in 1985, and after living in Fiji, that I came to terms with the limitations of participatory research.

My interest in labour history developed during my six years (1982-87) teaching at the University of the South Pacific. Unable to easily continue my earlier research, I took a stronger interest in Pacific history and embarked on a history of the Fiji Public Service Association. These years were fascinating and politically charged both within the university and outside within Fiji. Participation in some of these changes reinforced my interest in Pacific labour history and an awareness of the political dimension in this.

Why a Labour History for the Pacific?

Labels and affiliations, particularly to disciplines and sub-disciplines, inevitably require explanation and justification. This seems often to be excessively so when the word 'labour' is involved. Why has there been such a slow gestation of a Pacific labour history and what contribution has it to make to Pacific historiography? Some might suggest that labour history should be shunted into 'political' or 'social' history. For me, the study of labour in both the contemporary and historical setting should be approached as widely and flexibly as possible, for labour history focuses on not just the work people do, the way production is organised and the inherent power relations, but also the actual lives and identities of working people. I have always maintained that labour history in the Pacific needs to address all kinds of workers, including women and those in the informal sector. Those who have suggested that there is no labour history of the Pacific have a narrow vision of the institutional, trades hall, blue-collared male worker.

The lives of many Pacific Islanders have been shaped by conditions of labour, particularly through processes of colonial and capitalist expansion into the region. The meaning of this to Pacific Islanders and their participation in and shaping of the labour process in Pacific societies needs to be understood. Although labour history can show that workers were not just 'passive victims' of 'capitalist incorporation', it also reminds us that Pacific Islanders frequently laboured under powerful constraints and exploitative conditions. Labour historians need to be aware of specific conditions of labour and the way Pacific Islanders, through their actions and culture, have mediated capitalist incorporation, the labour process and labour relations. Labour history thus contributes to the analysis of class formation within the

Pacific. A rapidly increasing number of Pacific Islanders are becoming dependent upon wage labour but this has not automatically assigned them to a rigidly stratified and politically conscious working class. If such rigid models were problematical in the history of industrial nations, they are even more so in the Pacific.

Nevertheless, while simplistic class models may be inappropriate, increasing research does reveal expressions of working people's awareness of common problems and their shared identity. Several problems in the contemporary Pacific stem from the economic dislocation of Pacific societies, economic, political and gender inequalities, and the growing internationalisation of economies within the region. While it may be tempting for some to dismiss resultant political and industrial disputes as something sudden, irrational or inexplicable, the study of labour history reveals that they have developed over a long period and are not unique to the present. Reconstructing workers' history has been seen as a means of restoring pride and affirming identity with the past, as was the case with the centenary of the arrival of the first *Girmitiyas* to Fiji.

Why a Long, Slow Haul?

The slow development of labour history reflects several trends within Pacific historiography and related disciplines, especially anthropology and sociology. Although several years ago Jim Davidson made his plea for an islands-orientated history,[2] a social history reflecting these aims was slow to develop. His call was a reaction to imperial history and to history which lacked an island focus. Ensuing research did much to correct this, but continued to be written mainly from the perspective of the élite, whether indigenous or foreign. Before serious study of people's working lives within the Pacific could develop there was a need for more emphasis on a 'people's history' in post-colonial societies. Although Donald Denoon made a plea for this in 1973, it was not re-asserted until the early 1980s.[3]

K. R. Howe identified another problem, which he called 'monograph myopia'.[4] This orientation impeded the establishment of a broader labour history of the Pacific in two ways. Pacific Islander orientated history may have restored people into Pacific history but there remained a lack of synthesis, so

[2] J. W. Davidson, 'Problems of Pacific history', *Journal of Pacific History*, 1 (1966), 5-21.

[3] D. Denoon, 'People's history', Inaugural lecture at the University of Papua New Guinea (Port Moresby, 17 Apr. 1973); S. Durutalo, 'The liberation of the Pacific Island intellectual', *Review*, 4:10 (1983), 6-18; J. Leckie, 'Towards a review of history in the South Pacific', The *Journal of Pacific Studies*, 9 (1983), 9-69.

[4] K.R. Howe, 'Pacific history in the 1980s: new directions or monograph myopia', *Pacific Studies*, 3 (1979), 81-90.

that common themes and the broader context of political and economic forces were often overlooked. It also discouraged comparison between the Pacific and other colonised regions. This emerged in a labour history symposium at the 1985 Pacific History Association's conference in Suva, where participants were reluctant to draw comparisons and generalise about the history of labour and workers throughout the region.

Vijay Naidu has discussed at length how an absence of class analysis impeded the development of Pacific labour history.[5] He points to several factors, some of which were outlined in my earlier survey of Pacific history.[6] Whether the development of a Pacific working class or classes is accepted or not, there was a tendency by many historians to play down class identity. For example, protest movements such as Maasina Rule were dismissed as cargo cults, rather than being considered as expressions of political or labour protest.[7] Naidu suggests that scholars overlooked economic and political restructuring which precipitated class formation within Pacific societies.[8]

A further impediment to a generalised Pacific labour history was the persistence of a dualist approach to the study of Pacific societies, with the depiction of the subsistence, rural/traditional and the monetised, urban/modern as mutually exclusive and self-contained sectors.[9] Such a paradigm overlooks the interconnections between these two sectors and the role labour reserves have played in capitalist development. Labour history has also been impeded by the description of the Pacific Islands as predominantly subsistence-based. Yet we know that these societies produced considerable surpluses, which often resulted in complex exchange networks and ceremonies.

Class analysis and labour history have been diverted by a preoccupation with ethnic, tribal or cultural specifics, where ethnicity has frequently been perceived as the primary motivating force in inter-group relations. There are many examples of observers describing workers primarily in terms of their ethnic category, regardless of the central issues involved, or how the participants perceived their relationship with one another or the situation. This has been especially applicable to the dismissal of industrial disputes within Fiji, as 'Indian strikes' or as trade unions serving as vehicles for politically ambitious Indians.

[5] V. Naidu, 'The development of class analysis in the South Pacific, part one', in C. Moore, J. Leckie and D. Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific* (Townsville 1990), 244-55.

[6] Leckie, 'Towards a review of history'.

[7] See P. Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound : a Study of 'Cargo Cults' in Melanesia* (London 1957); I. Frazer 'Solomon Islands labour history and Maasina Rule', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 191-203.

[8] Naidu, 'The development of class analysis', 245-6.

[9] Ibid, 246.

Ideological reasons for neglect of labour history have been emphasised by Michael Howard.[10] He suggests that most Pacific societies did not undergo prolonged nationalist struggles, as in many other colonised regions. Although nationalism can serve to suppress class consciousness, it can precipitate political engagement and an awareness of common struggles. Many Pacific scholars were unaware of or avoided class-related issues. Simione Durutalo further argues that Pacific Islanders have been robbed of an understanding of not only colonial political and economic relations but also of such power relations within their own societies.[11] As a reconstruction of Pacific Islanders' labour history touches on such issues and can challenge dominant ideological constructions, it was not actively encouraged.

In Britain, much of the early writing on labour came from critics of the evils of industrialisation and active practitioners within the labour movement itself. They were motivated by utilitarian, propagandising and idealistic ends, for example, Friedrich Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England.*[12] Much labour history has been preoccupied with documentation and the conviction that by 'telling it all' exploitative conditions could be exposed and eradicated, either through reformist or revolutionary means. The prolific writing of Beatrice and Sidney Webb documented the emergence of the organised labour movement and working class culture,[13] while Barbara and John Hammond wrote several studies of the impact of the industrial revolution on the lives of ordinary people.[14] After this, until the rediscovery of the English working class by Edward Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm during the 1960s,[15] British labour history became shackled in countless trade union histories, particularly as unions celebrated various jubilees and centenaries.

These trends have a number of implications for Pacific labour history. For instance, the kind of emancipation-oriented documentation contemporaries in Europe practised was generally not considered necessary within the Pacific (there were similar reformist goals in some of the contemporary campaigning against the Melanesian labour trade and Indian indenture). Labour history

[10] M. C. Howard, 'History and industrial relations in the South Pacific', *South Pacific Forum*, 3:1 (1986), 2-3.

[11] Durutalo, 'The liberation of the Pacific Island intellectual'.

[12] F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England. From personal observation and authentic sources. With an introduction by Eric Hobsbawm* (London 1982, Engels's book first pub. 1845).

[13] See R. Harrison, 'The Webbs as historians of trade unionism', in R. Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London 1981), 322-6.

[14] E.g., B. Webb and S. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London 1894); B. Hammond and J. L. Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer* (London 1911).

[15] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth 1968). E. Hobsbawm, 'Labour history and ideology', *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (1974), 372.

has tended to be preoccupied with proletarianisation and work in the formal waged sector. Hobsbawm also noted how British labour history tended to identify the working classes with the labour movement.[16] The impetus behind European labour history was not so pressing in the Pacific, where proletarianisation was uneven and haphazard, and unpaid, casual, and less formalised labour patterns predominated. The development of formal workers' unions there have been late and localised. Moreover being much fewer in number, with often meagre resources, workers were not in a position to commission trade union histories.

The writing of labour history, and indeed social history, in the Pacific has been impeded by problems of documentation. Historians in industrialised societies have faced difficulties in trying to write people's histories where there is a dearth of source material, but these problems have been even more glaring in the colonial context. Conventional Pacific history was based upon documentary evidence, and as in most colonised regions the story of the Pacific for many years was told largely through colonial and official records. Such sources did not supply the kind of quantitative evidence vital for reconstructing the parameters of labour. During the colonial period newspapers were notoriously bad at reporting details about working people. Despite such impediments, as a recently published collection revealed,[17] there has been a growing interest in research into Pacific labour history, which generated a number of methodological, historical and theoretical issues reminding us that there are still large gaps in the labour historiography, particularly of Polynesia. Several contributors to the volume did not identify themselves as labour historians, but reinterpreted their specialised knowledge from a labour or workers' perspective. On the other hand, there are a small number of Pacific historians and social scientists who locate their work within Pacific labour studies and are critically engaged with the subject.

The Shape of Pacific Labour History

The shifting interest in Pacific labour history has reflected a number of changes within Pacific and international historiography. Pacific history broadened during the 1980s to pay greater attention to social history, ideology and gender. New methods, such as those of ethnohistory and oral history, gained respectability. New paradigms generated from research in other colonised regions also were useful. Research on African labour history has had a significant impact, leading for example to greater attention to productive relations within pre-colonial and post-colonial societies, class formation and

[16] Hobsbawm, ibid.
[17] Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*.

consciousness, labour reserves, culture, ethnicity, the labour process and less formal aspects of labour. The rich historiography of African mining labour provided comparative models and material for 'Atu Bain's research into the history of goldmining workers at Vatukoula in Fiji.[18] Michael Hess's study of the history of industrial relations in Papua New Guinea also benefited from comparative research in other formerly colonised societies.[19]

Developments in Pacific history reflected trends in closely related disciplines. As noted, as long as anthropologists ignored productive relations and social change, they had little to contribute to the growth of labour history. The 'discovery' of classes and political economy[20] by Pacific social scientists has been very helpful. My own research has drawn upon models and comparative examples from industrial relations research. Pacific labour history gained considerable impetus from an inter-disciplinary approach but also continued to build upon the foundations laid by the work done on indentured labour.

Before examining the methodological and historiographical issues, it might be useful to note some of the contributions that have been made for the post-World War I period. Most of this work has concerned waged workers. Two volumes deserve particular mention. The *Labour in the South Pacific* collection provides an overview of the development of labour markets, workers' experiences and labour relations for the region and within certain countries, as well as case-studies relevant to the dimensions of class and culture.[21] Edward Beechert's *Working in Hawaii* is the only comprehensive labour history of a Pacific Islands nation, tracing working and living conditions of workers from pre-capitalist to contemporary times.[22] There are also a growing number of works concerning the histories of workers in specific industries.[23] Bain's study of goldmining workers is undoubtedly the most

[18] 'A. Bain, 'Vatukoula - Rock of Gold: labour in the goldmining industry of Fiji, 1930-1970', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1986).

[19] M. Hess, 'Unionism and economic development: a Papua New Guinea case study', PhD thesis, University of New South Wales (Sydney 1986).

[20] See Naidu, 'The development of class analysis', 247-9. B. R. Finney, 'Polynesian peasants and proletarians: socio-economic change among the Tahitians of French Polynesia', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 74 (1965), 269-328, was one of the first studies to apply class terminology to Pacific societies.

[21] Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds.), *Labour in the South Pacific*. Detailed surveys of colonial workers and conditions of labour are given in J. Leckie, 'Workers in colonial Fiji: 1870-1970', 47-66; C. Moore 'Workers in colonial Papua New Guinea: 1884-1975', 30-46; D. Winslow, 'Workers in colonial New Caledonia to 1945', 108-121.

[22] E. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: a Labor History* (Honolulu 1985).

[23] The following section surveys selective examples: Bain, 'Vatukoula - Rock of Gold'; Nii-K Plange, 'Coming in from the cold: gold mining and proletarianization of Fijians, 1970-85', *Labour, Capital and Society*, 18:1 (1985), 88-127; A. Chowning, 'The development of ethnic identity and ethnic stereotypes on Papua New Guinea plantations', *Journal de la*

comprehensive. Plantation workers were addressed in a special issue of the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* and Judith Bennett's history of the Solomon Islands contains a section on copra workers. Eric Larson explored migrant plantation labour from Tikopia to the Russell Islands in the period since 1949 and the strategies adopted by Levers management to co-opt this labour force. There are now several accounts of the war experiences of Pacific Islanders but Lamont Lindstrom's study is one of the few to emphasise a labour perspective.[24] Samoan representation of military work from 1940 to the present has also been studied.[25]

Little historical or contemporary research has been done on white collar and public sector workers in the Pacific, with the exception of my own work on the Fiji Public Service Association, the Association of European Civil Servants and the Viti Civil Servants Association.[26] This involved not only tracing the growth of labour organisations and labour relations with the state, but also reconstructing the meaning and implications of this for public sector workers.

In addition to the above, I have also been tracing the growth of organised labour in Fiji and the historic links between Pacific and international labour bodies. Of all the books on the Fiji coups, Michael Howard's probably gives the most detailed account of the links between trade unions and the Fiji Labour Party. Kevin Hince has documented the first known attempt by waterside workers to form a trade union in 1916 in Fiji. He has also detailed the historical background of unions and industrial relations in Fiji in 1970. D.K.

Société des Océanistes (1986), 153-62; R. Keesing, 'Plantation networks, plantation culture: the hidden side of Melanesia', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* (1986), 163-70; J. A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: a History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* (Honolulu 1987), 167-77; E. H. Larson 'Tikopia plantation labour and company management relations', *Oceania*, 40:3 (1970), 94-209.

[24] L. Lindstrom, 'Working encounters: oral histories of World War II labor corps from Tanna, Vanuatu', in G. White and L. Lindstrom (eds), *The Pacific Theater. Island Representations of World War II* (Honolulu 1989), 397.

[25] R. Franco, 'Samoan representations of World War II and military work: the emergence of international movement networks', in White and Lindstrom (eds), *The Pacific Theater*, 373-94.

[26] J. Leckie, 'The functioning of public service unions during the colonial era in Fiji', *South Pacific Forum*, 2:2 (1986), 1-36; J. Leckie, 'Confrontation with the state: industrial conflict and the Fiji Public Service Association during the 1970s and its aftermath in the 1980s', *SouthPacific Forum*, 4:2 (1988), 137-79; J. Leckie, 'Development for the workers? The reaction of civil service unions to state policies in Fiji', in M.C. Howard and T. Wheelwright (eds), *The Struggle for Development. Essays in Honour of Ernst Utrecht* (Vancouver 1990), 85-104; J. Leckie, 'From localisation to politicisation: the Fiji Public Service Association', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the SouthPacific*, 238-43; J. Leckie, 'State coercion and public sector unionism in post-coup Fiji', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 16 (1991), 1-24.

Sharma's thesis discusses early farmers' unions during the 1930s and 1940s. Hess has written extensively about trade unions in Papua New Guinea, particularly the Milne Bay Workers' Association and the Central District Waterside Workers' Association. Beechert and Noel Kent, among others, have written about labour organisations in Hawaii. Ian Frazer has been researching the growth of formal labour organisations and industrial relations in the Solomon Islands. Dick Scott's recent history of the Cook Islands contains details of labour organisation and protests there becoming embroiled with New Zealand's labour and political relations during the Cold War period. His account is based on research undertaken by Bert Roth, who has also published one of the few studies of a labour organiser, Albert Henry.[27]

Labour protest has also been documented, although by no means adequately, for the Pacific. Overt protest has been easier to study than the covert expressions Robin Cohen analysed in other regions. Cultural specificities are an important aspect of how labour protest may be expressed. For Fiji, Ahmed Ali has discussed the 1920 and 1921 strikes; I have outlined several strikes during and after World War II, and industrial action by civil servants during the 1970s; Bain compared the 1947 mineworkers' strike with the 1959 oilworkers' strike documented by Hempenstall and Rutherford. Accounts of strikes in Papua New Guinea include Bill Gammage on the general strike at Rabaul in 1929 and Hess's discussion of the 1972 Port Moresby waterside workers' strike. The 1981 public service strike in Western Samoa produced several accounts, many being unsympathetic to the strikers.

[27] J. Leckie, 'Labour, regionalism and internationalism: a case study in Fiji', in *Proceedings of the Eighth Pacific History Conference, Guam, December 1990* (Guam, in press); M. C. Howard, *Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State* (Vancouver 1991); K. W. Hince, 'Trade unionism in Fiji', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 13, 4 (1971), 368-89; K. W. Hince, 'The earliest origins and suppression of trade unionism in the Fiji Islands', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 10 (1985), 93-101; D. K. Sharma, 'The origin and early development of the farmers' unions in Fiji 1937-1943', MA thesis, University of Auckland (Auckland 1965); M. Hess, 'The formation and collapse of the Milne Bay Workers' Association', MA thesis, University of Papua New Guinea (Port Moresby 1982); Hess, 'Unionism and economic development'; M. Hess, 'Developing credible unionism in Papua New Guinea: the Central District Waterside Workers' Union in 1972', *Journal of Pacific History*, 22 (1987), 82-93; M. Hess, '"Doing something for the workers?": the establishment of Port Moresby's Central District Waterside Workers' Union', *Labour History*, 54 (1988), 83-98; Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*; N. Kent, 'The development of trade unionism in Hawaii' in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 226-231; I. Frazer, 'Trade unions and the struggles of Solomon Islands workers in the early 1960s', *South Pacific Forum*, 3:1 (1986), 60-96; I. Frazer, 'Trade unions and the state in Solomon Islands', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 17:1 (1992), 23-38 ; D. Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah* (Auckland 1991), 234-69; H. A. Roth, 'Albert Henry as labour organizer: a struggle for power in the Cook Islands', *Journal of Pacific History*, 12:3 (1977), 176-87. There have been other articles on trade unions in PNG, but Hess's work adopts a comprehensive historical perspective.

Rick Snell documents this literature as well as providing the most recent and thorough analysis. Frazer treats Maasina Rule as an expression of labour protest, while other examples of labour unrest during World War II are given in White and Lindstrom's collection.[28] The historiography of indentured labour is still much richer for less organised and hidden forms of resistance.[29]

For all this research, there is little information on the lives and experiences of ordinary women. We cannot begin to understand the history of labour outside the formal wage sector and organised worker organisations unless what is predominantly the work of women is addressed. Caroline Ralston's account of women workers in Samoa and Tonga during the first half of the 20th century partly closes this gap. Christine Ward-Gailey's controversial study of Tongan women also contains material on women's productive activities. Much of the existing information on women and work has drawn upon anthropological accounts. Here Annette Weiner's study of Kiriwina society in the Trobriand Islands is a pioneer in emphasising the productive role of women. Considerable discussion of women's work, particularly for Melanesia is contained in Denise O'Brien's and Sharon Tiffany's collection. The 1987 issue of *The Journal of Pacific Studies* contained historical and contemporary case-studies.[30]

[28] R. Cohen, 'Resistance and hidden forms of consciousness among African workers', *Review of African Political Economy*, 19 (1980), 18-22. Examples of protest from the Pacific include A. Ali, *Plantation to Politics* (Suva 1980), 43-106; Leckie, 'Confrontation with the state'; Leckie, 'Workers in colonial Fiji'; A. Bain, 'Class, communalism and the 1947 Fiji Mineworkers strike', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 232-7; P. J. Hempenstall and N. Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent in the South Pacific* (Suva 1984), 73-86; B. Gammage, 'The Rabaul strike, 1929', *Journal of Pacific History*, 10:3 (1975), 3-29; Hess, 'Developing credible unionism'; R. Snell, 'Western Samoa trade unionism: The 1981 public service strike', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 17:1 (1992), 69-84; Frazer, 'Solomon Islands labour history'; White and Lindstrom, *The Pacific Theater*.

[29] E.g., B. V. Lal, 1980 'Approaches to the study of Indian indentured emigration with special reference to Fiji', *Journal of Pacific History*, 15 (1980), 52-70; B. Lal, 'Murmurs of dissent: non-resistance on Fiji plantations', *Hawaiian Journal of History*, 20 (1986), 188-213; S. Shameem, 'Girmitiya women in Fiji: work, resistance and survival' in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 148-54.

[30] C. Ralston, 'Introduction' to special issue, 'Sanctity and power: gender in Polynesian history', *Journal of Pacific History*, 22:3-4 (1987); C. Ralston, 'Women workers in Samoa and Tonga in the early twentieth century', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 67-77; C. W. Gailey, *Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands* (Austin 1987); A. B. Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchanges* (Austin 1976); D. O'Brien and S. Tiffany (eds), *Rethinking Women's Roles: Perspectives from the Pacific* (Berkeley 1984).

Methodological and Historiographical Problems and Issues

Research into labour history has been impeded by an apparent lack of documentary sources, especially in the less formalised labour sector. Official archival sources do contain information, particularly when labour has been perceived as a problem (such as something to be procured), during periods of industrial unrest and in the documentation of labour legislation. Official data needs to be treated cautiously when dealing with labour statistics and reports. Clive Moore was advised by labour officials to add an extra 25% to compensate for discrepancies within Papua New Guinea's labour statistics for the 1960s and 1970s.[31] Even when labour reports indicate trends in the labour market and working conditions, some employers have covered up or altered wage sheets and sickness and accident reports, as is the case in the present-day garment and goldmining industries in Fiji. Quantitative documentation for the labouring activities and conditions of Pacific societies is also considerably complicated by the prevalence of unpaid labour or work within the informal sector or family enterprises. This has led to a vast underestimation of economic activities and unemployment, particularly for women.

Newspapers are an obvious source, although I have found that often significant industrial matters were not given adequate coverage in the past. In Fiji, labour-related issues undoubtedly attracted greater media attention once unions took prominent and politically controversial roles. As media coverage depends upon the degree of censorship, editorial policy, ownership and sponsorship, publications can also serve to play down public attention and sympathy for workers' grievances. Newspapers outside the Islands may provide additional information or commentary. For example, the 1981 Western Samoan public service strike had extensive coverage, not only within Western Samoa but also in New Zealand. Some unions issue their own publications, such as the Fiji Trades Union Congress's *Fiji Labour Sentinel*, or newsletters, such as the Fiji Public Service Association's *Service Worker*.[32]

More mundane detail about the internal functioning of trade unions and an understanding of labour relations at the shop-floor level can really only come from trade union records. The keeping of these varies from island to island and may depend on a number of factors. Records, for instance are often shunted around each time there is a change of office-holder. Continuity of record-keeping has not been helped by the inability of most Pacific unions to finance permanent staff. However, union records within the Pacific do exist.

[31] Moore, 'Workers in colonial Papua New Guinea', 45.

[32] M. C. Howard and L. S. Howard, *Industrial Relations in the South Pacific: a Preliminary Bibliography* (Suva 1985), is a bibliography of newspaper articles on industrial relations in the South Pacific.

Difficulties may be faced in documenting politically sensitive issues, while ethical problems of confidentiality are also a serious consideration.

Company records are important for the history of workers and labour relations in a particular industry. Bain consulted the records of Emperor Goldmining for her history of goldmining workers at Vatukoula. As in the use of union records, problems can be encountered in using documents which may be critical of a still functioning company's policies and practices. Mission records are another potential source as is oral history. I have also gathered information and insight through participant observation in both informal and more formal settings. Poems, songs,[33] art, posters and film are important expressions of working people's culture and should not be overlooked.

Historiographical Issues

A fundamental issue, which has caused debate, concerns the substance and parameters of labour history in the Pacific. Labour historians reacted against the institutionally based roots of British labour history and became concerned with establishing a social history of the working class. Recent critiques of this, emanating from a deconstructionist perspective, have questioned the methodological validity of such an endeavour. Within South Asian historiography, the Subaltern Studies group emphasised analysis at the level of situation and contingency, rather than through a teleologically-led Marxist approach.[34] Subalternists have refrained from generalisations, and while acknowledging theory as providing useful insights, see it as a construction. This approach recognises the efforts of subordinate people to deal with their situations rather than imposing the observer's expert analysis.[35]

Work to date in Pacific labour history has become caught up in other debates, such as the discourse concerning agency and structure, and the extent to which Pacific Islanders, especially the subalterns, forged their own history. In his study of Solomon Islands labour history and Maasina Rule, Frazer suggested that Islander orientated studies have over-corrected the 'fatal impact' theory and exaggerated the options or power Pacific workers had in

[33] E.g., Lal, 'Approaches to the study of Indian indentured emigration', 67-70.

[34] These writings have been published in several volumes edited by Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society*, 1- 5 (Delhi 1982-87).

[35] Criticisms of history from the bottom up include G. Eley, 'Some recent tendencies in social history', in G. G. Iggers and H. T. Parker (eds), *International Handbook of Historical Studies* (Westport 1979), 59, who warned that this sometimes becomes preoccupied with empiricism and isolates the subject from relations of subordination and the larger context of class structure and the state. J. Zeitlen, 'From labour history to the history of industrial relations', *Economic History Review*, 40:2 (1987), 159-84, advocates a return to studying the formal institutions and relationships between workers, employers and the state.

the face of coercion by the colonial powers and their own leaders.[36] Attention needs to be paid to the constraints on people's ability to act, taking into account such matters as world swings in commodity prices, external political pressures and prevailing wages and conditions. Equally, broader analyses of economic and political structures[37] should not neglect the centrality of human action, people and culture. June Nash's account of Bolivian tin miners attempted to adopt a more holistic approach by placing an ethnography of labour against the 'world system'.[38] As far as I am aware there is no equivalent study of Pacific labour for the post-World War I period. However, while Beechert's history of Hawaiian workers emphasises the active and central role workers took in shaping their destinies, as well as the state's economy, he confirms that this involved considerable constraints and class struggle.[39]

A central question in Pacific labour historiography therefore has been the applicability of class analysis to Pacific societies, both in structural terms and in distinguishing class consciousness. As I have noted much of this debate emanates from interpretative and ideological differences and differing methodological approaches.[40] Related to this is the interpretation of exploitation and capitalist incorporation, and debate about what value and meaning this had for the Islanders concerned. Anthropologists have also begun to consider these questions. On the one hand Marshall Sahlins asked how the culture of capitalism was absorbed into the Islanders' cosmology, so that rather than being incorporated into the world system, the Islanders perceived their local system as being enriched.[41] But Jonathon Friedman cautions against underestimating the impact of the world system on indigenous cultures, while Frazer has depicted how Solomon Islanders were incorporated into a world system. He also emphasised their perception of exploitative relations, their resistance and the integration of indigenous and incorporated idioms to become expressions and popular movements of labour and political discontent. Bain's history of goldmining workers at Vatukoula takes a similar perspective, paying close attention to the constraints and

[36] Frazer, 'Solomon Islands labour history'.

[37] E. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley 1983); P. Worsley, *The Three Worlds. Culture and World Development* (London 1984).

[38] J. Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines* (New York 1979).

[39] Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 332.

[40] J. Leckie, 'The development of class analysis in the South Pacific, part two', in Moore, Leckie and Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific*, 250.

[41] M. Sahlins, 'Cosmologies of capitalism: The trans-Pacific sector of "the World System"', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74 (1988), 1-51.

strategies by the employer and the state to counteract emerging class consciousness. [42]

This raises problems of terminology and analysis. Can, and how do, we locate and define classes in the Pacific context? Social scientists are critical of dualist economic and social models which depict a subsistence and waged sector. Separate and simplistic categories such as peasants and proletarians are also problematical when applied to many Pacific village communities which are becoming dependent on the cash economy, not only through cash crop production but also through wage employment.[43]

What of categories such as the working classes, workers or working people? Is there a distinctive subaltern or working class, and class consciousness, even if separated by regional, linguistic, gender, age, religious and ethnic divisions? The problem of class consciousness is further compounded by the question of ideological hegemony where dominated groups may take on the ideology of the élite. Workers are not necessarily poor and this needs to be considered. My interest in the history of civil servants has thrown up several contradictory positions regarding 'white-collar' workers who may occupy powerful positions within the state bureaucracy. These workers have been able to achieve considerable industrial power through their collective association. While civil servants are popularly perceived as middle class, they can be located within an enlarged working class. The New International Labour Studies school recognises class contradictions and problems of categorisation, but advocates a broadly-based view of the working class.[44] This interpretation is critical of the labour aristocracy thesis,[45] and suggests that this concept has been a convenient scapegoat for Third World politicians to blame development problems on.

Other issues emerging from Pacific labour history which relate to that of class and class consciousness concern the importance of ethnicity and communal interests, particularly in Fiji. We have already seen that Bain emphasises the class basis in her analysis of the 1947 mineworkers' strike,

[42] J. Friedman, 'Review Essay of *Islands of History* by Marshall Sahlins', *History and Theory*, 26:1 (1987), 72-99; Frazer, 'Solomon Islands labour history'; Bain, 'Labour protest and control'.

[43] E.g., S. Fahey, 'Development, labour relations and gender in Papua New Guinea', *Mankind*, 16, 2 (1986), 118-31.

[44] See R. Munck, *The New International Labour Studies. An introduction* (London 1988) for a discussion of this.

[45] This sought to identify an élite of higher paid and skilled workers. E. Hobsbawm, 'The labour aristocracy in nineteenth century Britain', in *Labouring Men* (London 1964), 272-343, raised this in 1964 in relation to the history of the British working class. The concept was subsequently applied to labour history in the Third World, e.g., P. Waterman, 'The "labour aristocracy" in Africa: introduction to a debate', *Development and Change*, 6 (1975), 57-73.

as opposed to communal or sectional interests.[46] She has demonstrated how 'divide and rule' tactics along ethnic lines were effectively utilised as a form of labour control at Vatukoula. Other research reveals that contrary to popular preconceptions, the development of trade unions can not be attributed to one ethnic group.[47]

How do we assess the impact of World War II? For long the neglect of this on the lives of ordinary Pacific Islanders[48] was frustrating in trying to trace labour histories, as there were tremendous changes in the nature of the labour market, labour relations, labour legislation and conditions during and after the war. Some researchers have cautioned about over-emphasising the impact of the war. In his interpretation of Maasina Rule as a labour and political protest, Frazer recognises that World War II was a catalyst for labour protest with its tremendous impact on labour conditions and the raising of workers' demands in the Pacific, but also places this against a longer history of exploitative labour conditions in the Solomon Islands.[49]

My research has also raised questions concerning the extent and direction of links between workers' organisations within the region and outside.[50] There has been a tendency by participants, observers and historians to attribute the development of labour organisations and industrial unrest within the Pacific to outside influences. This 'trade union imperialism thesis' has been common at both ends of the political spectrum. Opponents of labour organisation have tended to see trade unions as foreign to the Pacific Way, or more extremely as part of a Communist plot, while others have sometimes too readily dismissed trade unions in the Pacific as having been pawns of international labour, business and state agencies. Careful reading of the written and oral historical record instead indicates more internal impetus.[51] An associated issue here is the emphasis given to the role of 'rank and file' or to leadership.

Care needs to be taken not to have over-idealistic expectations of workers' radicalism and not to attribute excessive blame when they fail to meet these. Equally to be avoided are over-romanticism and generalisation, sometimes

[46] Bain, 'Class, communalism and the 1947 Fiji Mineworkers strike'.

[47] Leckie, 'Workers in colonial Fiji'.

[48] An early exception was J. Griffin, H. Nelson, and S. Firth, *Papua New Guinea. A Political History* (Richmond, 1979), 70-101.

[49] Frazer 'Solomon Islands labour history'.

[50] Leckie, 'Labour, regionalism and internationalism'.

[51] See P. Kinloch, 'The strike in Western Samoa: An interpretation', *Pacific Viewpoint*, 23:2 (1982), 161-72; Snell, 'Western Samoa trade unionism' and K. Hince, 'Industrial relations in Kiribati', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 17:1 (1992), 57-68, on the 1980 Botakin Karikirakean Aroia Tan Makuri, for how culture mediated industrial action and subsequent labour institutions.

nostalgic, in the search for the dignified worker, in the rise of the proletariat. Recent labour and Subaltern studies caution the writer against injecting a structure or consciousness which may not be there.

In researching and writing contemporary labour history, the methodological and historiographical questions can easily become entangled with active political issues and personal opinions. It is extremely difficult for researchers to remain neutral and disengaged from their subject, especially in participant observation. Labour historians who identify with the labour movement can expect to encounter resistance when seeking information from those with other perspectives.

Which Direction Next?

It is time to think of establishing a labour archives for the Pacific Islands. This is particularly important when unions and labour political organisations face repressive measures from the state and when they voluntarily or otherwise cease to function. A labour archive might also provide a central repository for the deposit of newsletters, pamphlets, memoirs and so on. It would be a broad collection, including personal accounts, papers, oral histories (including testimonies collected by researchers, as well as transcripts of public meetings), newspapers and the constitutions of labour associations. Location and access would present problems. What role should organised labour play in it, especially if their records are involved? Which organisations would fund such an archive?

Gaps remain in the geographical and cultural coverage of labour history in the Pacific. Much research has centred on Melanesia, which is perhaps a reflection of its population size, the greater impact of labour processes on people's lives and the preoccupation with the labour trade. Within Melanesia, while there has been a concentration of work on Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea and some attention to New Caledonia, there is particularly a need for research on Vanuatu. We need to enlarge our understanding of labour patterns in Polynesian sòcieties, especially in French Polynesia. What of the Polynesian micro-states? Within Fiji more research and analysis are needed of indigenous Fijian labour and class identity and Indo-Fijian labour history in the post-indenture period. Emphasis should be given to a less ethnically pluralist approach, particularly within more multi-ethnic industries and organisations. The political role of workers' organisations and their links with political parties and nationalist movements require more analysis. Little

research has been undertaken into the links between the church and labour relations and the relationship between religion and workers' identity.[52]

Women's labour history in the Pacific is a major area that requires further research. In the paid sector this includes workers in health, education, manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism. In particular, domestic service has been a principal waged occupation for Pacific women, but partly because of its private and isolated nature, it has been poorly documented. The history of women's, as well as men's, experiences within the informal, self-employed sectors, family businesses and in cash-cropping also requires more investigation.

More analysis of leadership and the relationship between labour leaders and the rank and file in labour organisations is required, and of the relationship between labour institutions, labour relations and capital. Further histories of companies and employers' associations would help provide data to examine such issues. There is also a need to address questions that may not leave behind a material historical record. What can be understood of a workers' culture in the Pacific in the past? How was work perceived by workers? Care needs to be taken to be sensitive to cultural specificities such as the importance of kinship. How did culture mediate with class? Greater attention could be given to attempting to reconstruct the covert expressions of this and labour resistance. This throws up the question of how workers accommodated to new labour demands and conditions.

For too long, the slow haul in Pacific labour historiography reflected an unwillingness by academics to address the presence of working people and the impact that capitalist development had on Pacific societies. Pacific history was not subjected to the class analysis which has been a catalyst in the writing of labour history elsewhere. Restraints on the development of a historiography of labour also came from the different patterns of proletarianisation within the Pacific compared to industrialised societies, although as noted this did not impede the writing of labour histories in other colonised regions such as Africa. A foundation has been laid for a labour history of the Pacific and for this to proceed two issues must be addressed. First, labour history must extend beyond the concerns of institutionalised labour or the formal workforce. Secondly, it is extremely difficult to divorce the writing of labour history from contemporary political issues. Pacific labour history is now being reconstructed at a time when globally such research is unfashionable. But there are still several questions which further research into the labour history of the Pacific can address and which need to go beyond simple reconstruction. Regardless of the interpretation drawn, labour history deals with the reality

[52] For Kiribati see T. Neemia, 'The impact of the strike and the role of the church in Kiribati', BD thesis, Pacific Theological College (Suva 1982).

of the lives of most men and women. If we are to understand identity and culture in Pacific societies, then the working lives of their members and the place of these within Pacific communities can not be omitted.

ELEVEN

Colonised Women: Writing about Polynesian Women*

CAROLINE RALSTON

WHY, AND HOW, do we write histories of the past? What pertinence do they have for the present? What engages us? What links do we see between the past and the present? Having been vitally involved with Pacific history for more than 20 years it is high time that I reflected more deeply on these sorts of questions and the interconnections between my personal and professional life. This workshop dedicated to reflection and reflexivity on the present state of the art in the writing of Pacific history provides a timely opportunity to make this personal-professional investigation more systematically than before, and to clarify if I can what in my past has influenced and continues to influence my historical concerns and priorities.

For much of my career I have been singularly unaware of the personal, political frameworks that have influenced my work, but now that I am concerned with issues of gender such blindly assumed objectivity is not possible, and one vital question that has confronted me as I have researched the history of Polynesian women has been: is it inevitable that a white feminist writing about Polynesian women, both past and present, will continue to be part of the colonising process, which has been identified in so many academics' attitudes and publications on peoples of non-Western cultures?[1]

Now my feminism inflects the history I write. This identity of interest between personal politics and professional involvement was not, however,

* I would like to acknowledge the help I have received from a number of Maori women who have discussed and argued with me about my research. My particular thanks to Joan Ropiha who has been most generous with her time and knowledge. The final product is, of course, my own responsibility.

1 The literature on this topic is prolific from Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London 1978) to much more recently and specifically Polynesian, Jeffrey Sissons, *Te Waimana The Spring of Mana. Tuhoe History and the Colonial Encounter* (Dunedin 1991).

nearly so clear-cut or conscious in earlier periods of my academic career. As a BA Honours student in the mid-1960s, I wrote a thesis on social reform in the state of Maharashtra in India, in which I concentrated particularly on the attempted reform during the late 19th century to raise the age of consent for women from age 12 to 14.[2] It would make a neat and intellectually satisfying pattern if I could claim that from an early age I had been a dedicated feminist concerned about women's issues. But such was not the case. I had accepted without question the androcentric interpretations offered in my undergraduate history courses and elsewhere at the University of Adelaide and in the world beyond at that time, and the thesis was totally uninformed by any feminist theory, practice or awareness. I had, however, always been interested in social history, the history of ordinary people, and with George Rudé and Hugh Stretton, the two professors of history at Adelaide at that time, as my mentors, that concern had been well nourished.

My interest in Pacific history as a possible area of postgraduate research was stimulated during my Honours programme by John Young, who offered for the first time that year a seminar in Pacific history that Bronwen Douglas and I both took. The fact that I was born and raised for the first 12 years of my life in New Zealand can not be seen to have influenced this decision. I had not met or known any Maori people during those years in the overwhelmingly white dominated town of Palmerston North. So what might look like significant continuities and influences in my early personal and academic life were in fact insubstantial.

Once established as a Pacific historian in the 1970s my movement from the study of beach communities to Polynesian gender relations reveals my on-going concern with social history and parallels my personal and political development from an association with Labor politics, anti-Vietnam War activities and a general commitment to anti-racism to a much more active involvement in feminist politics and a recognition of the particular individual and systemic constraints placed on Australian women's lives. In my professional life as a Pacific historian this movement can be clearly identified from a concern in my 'beach community' days with the impact of informal colonialism on the autonomy and well-being of Polynesians, which however ignored the differential impact experienced by Island men and women, to concerns about the impact of sexism, racism and colonialism on the majority of Polynesian women's lives and the particular gender models that have been imported with Western colonialism into the Island world.

My interest in the history of Polynesian women can be seen to involve two distinct political concerns, of which I have been increasingly aware in recent

[2] Caroline Melville, 'Social Reform in Maharashtra, 1860-1891', BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide (Adelaide 1966).

years. In studying the changing patterns of Polynesian women's lives, I seek to discover the nature of those lives before the impact of the West, to identify patterns of gender relations that were different from Western models and then to uncover the impact of and interaction between those Western models and indigenous forms. The political concerns embedded in this project are firstly to establish the complementary and participatory nature of Polynesian women's lives in the pre-contact period and to reveal how these have been transformed and at times undermined with the intrusion of the West. Repeatedly I have identified the impact of the introduction of Christianity and Western economic practices as crucial factors in the extensive changes that have occurred.

I feel compelled to express two caveats here, because I do not wish to be misunderstood. Firstly, I do not assume that gender relations in pre-contact Polynesian societies were automatically complementary and participatory. I have approached this very generalised Polynesian project island group by island group, and I have attempted to go into each new society I have studied without preconceptions. Most recently working on the Maori and having read a doctoral thesis on the women of Tikopia,[3] I have been fascinated to find that in these two Polynesian societies, which have been delineated most consistently in the past as strongly patrilineal and patriarchal, there is fascinating evidence to suggest that in pre-contact times these tendencies were much less pronounced than I had been led to expect. When I commenced research on early contact Maori society in 1991 I assumed that here was going to be the exception to the complementary patterns I had found elsewhere in parts of tropical Polynesia. When I scrutinised the established historical and anthropological canon more closely and compared it with early contact accounts of Maori society, the patrilineal, patriarchal emphasis seemed more and more uncertain.

Secondly it is not axiomatic that Western intrusion has been inevitably and consistently detrimental in women's lives. Linnekin's exposition on land holding and owning in mid-19th century Hawaii, where for a brief span of time Hawaiian women exercised a great deal of control, is a telling example of expanded opportunities for women in a period of informal colonialism.[4] It is important to recognise the unique historical experience of different islands and island groups and the differential impacts of Western intrusion that have occurred for chiefs and commoners, men and women. From my own research I believe the data reveal that pre-contact gender relations were characterised

[3] Judith Macdonald, 'Women of Tikopia', PhD thesis, University of Auckland (Auckland 1991).

[4] Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender, and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor 1990).

by participation and complementarity between the sexes and that in the long term the impact of the West has been detrimental to many aspects of the lives of most Polynesian women.

To return from this self-justificatory aside to my first political concern, I believe it is important to be as clear as possible about those patterns of gender relations that have long antecedents and those which have been introduced or developed post-contact, particularly since in more recent years male Island politicians have been vaunting the superiority of traditional ways and advocating a return to them. When it comes to patterns of gender relations these politicians tend to advocate male and female roles that are clearly of post-contact origin. Rabuka in Fiji in the late 1980s invoked an image of domesticated, privatised Fijian womanhood removed from the waged work-force and public life.[5] His *soi-disant* traditional model of appropriate male and female roles owed more to introduced Christian ideals than those of pre-contact Fiji. In one of her poems the Ni-Vanuatu poet Grace Mera Molisa speaks of bastard tradition being used to intimidate women.[6] To my knowledge Polynesian women have not expressed their disquiet so poignantly or publicly, but there is data available which reveal that they have questioned the men's definition of tradition and have refused at times to go along with male versions.[7]

I am always hopeful that Polynesian women might find useful the data collected from early contact accounts and mythological evidence that reveal patterns of gender relations different from those current today amongst Polynesian people, and that they might be able to use the information for their own present-day political and personal ends. Just once this hope has been publicly realised. I was asked to talk about the impact of the church on Pacific women's lives at the launch of a new journal of Pacific mission history. When I had been assured that a genuine attempt had been made to find a Pacific woman for the task I reluctantly agreed, comforted a little by the fact that an Island woman, a student in her third year at theological college, was willing to respond to my presentation. She read my paper well in advance of the event and we had a lengthy discussion about it, in which she expressed her pleasure and surprise at the material I had discovered. At the launch she used some of it on pre-contact gender roles and relations to exhort the male church

[5] Vanessa Griffen, 'Women and the Coups in Fiji', typescript paper (1988?).

[6] Grace Mera Molisa, *Black Stone* (Suva 1983), 24.

[7] Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, *Mana Wahine Maori. Selected Writings on Maori Women's Art, Culture and Politics* (Auckland 1991), 101-2.

hierarchy both Island and foreign to allow women a greater voice and rights of equal participation in church affairs than were currently permitted.[8]

My second political concern is to question the universality of theories of women's oppression that were fashionable in the 1970s,[9] and to offer examples of different gender models, some of which were not as oppressive as those current in the West particularly for middle-class women in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Here it is important to stress that I am not claiming that Polynesian women enjoyed the same power or access to resources as Polynesian men in recent pre-contact times or later, but that the patterns of gender relations were very different to those pertaining in the West at a similar time, and I believe they were less oppressive. Of course there was and is no one model of gender relations in either the West or Polynesia in any period of time.

My interest in Polynesian women arose from my positive impressions of many of them both while on fieldwork in the late 1960s when I was working on my study of beach communities and since. I was struck by their self-assurance, sense of independence and clear understanding of their position and future goals, and this despite heavy workloads, large families and limited access to education, employment opportunities and therefore cash.[10]

It is my deeply held belief that as human beings we can make changes in our lives by conscious, informed effort. Thus data on different models of female roles and patterns of gender relations from non-Western cultures offer Western women clear evidence that such relations are mutable and open to redefinition and reconstruction. My emphasis when analysing Polynesian women's past lives is on the complementary nature of men's and women's roles and the marked degree of participation women enjoyed in community affairs. It is not on male dominance, male power or the ideological constraints (particularly *tapu*) which impinged on women's lives, although these aspects are acknowledged and discussed within the more positive framework of women's efficacy in many aspects of daily pre-contact Polynesian life. Both at this workshop and on previous occasions, other Pacific experts have questioned the predominantly positive picture I present and questioned its

[8] Caroline Ralston, 'Pacific Island women in the context of Pacific cultures, Christian theologies and modernisation', and Iva Fischer, 'Forward to the past: Pacific women transforming Westernised cultures', *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies*, 1:2 (1990), 4-6, 7-9.

[9] For example see Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, 'Woman, Culture, and Society', and Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?', in M.Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds), *Woman, Culture and Society* (Stanford 1974), 17-42 and 67-87.

[10] Caroline Ralston, 'The study of women in the Pacific', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 4:1 (1991), 138.

accuracy, particularly for non-chiefly women.[11] Ron Crocombe challenged me after my presentation of an earlier version of this paper at the workshop, claiming that if he had given such a positive view of Polynesian men he would have been accused of sexist bias, and that anyway my view just was not right. The possibility of sexist bias I have already admitted. I collect my data as comprehensively and objectively as possible, but I make no special or absolute claim to objectivity. Crocombe's extensive experience of recent patterns of gender relations in Polynesia may render my picture of pre-contact times alien and unconvincing to him, but one of my basic arguments is how much Polynesian women's lives have changed in the past 200 years.

Certainly there is no question that the fragments of information that can be gleaned from mythological and early contact evidence about Polynesian women relate predominantly to chiefly women, a point I am always careful to underline. The dangers of extrapolating from this evidence to the experiences of non-chiefly women are great, but while non-chiefly women laboured more consistently and harder in food collection, child care and *tapa* making than chiefly women, their involvement in major cultural activities and vital aspects of daily life gave them I believe some standing in the face of male attempts at domination or aggression.[12]

Until quite recently there has been a marked tendency in the academic literature to dichotomise the representation of pre-contact and early post-contact Polynesian women into symbolic, ideological interpretations versus sociological analysis.[13] The symbolic interpretations have concentrated on traditional conceptions of women's nature (i.e. the *tapu:noa* debate), which, with the recent exceptions of F. A. Hanson, Nicholas Thomas, and others,[14] have presented a largely negative view of Polynesian women as dangerous, polluting, and whose presence was inimical to the success of many major community activities.[15] Sociological interpretations have focused upon

[11] Ron Crocombe and Jacqueline Leckie, at the Pacific history workshop, Canberra 1991.

[12] Caroline Ralston, 'Deceptive dichotomies: private/public, and nature/culture. Gender relations in Tonga in the early contact period', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 12 (1990), 65-82.

[13] Ralston, 'The study of women', 143-4.

[14] F.A. Hanson, 'Female pollution in Polynesia?', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 91 (1982), 335-81; Nicholas Thomas, 'Unstable categories: *tapu* and gender in the Marquesas', *Journal of Pacific History*, 22:3-4 (1987), 123-38; Caroline Ralston, 'Polyandry, "Pollution", "Prostitution". The Problems of Eurocentrism and Androcentrism in Polynesian Studies', in Barbara Caine et al. (eds), *Crossing Boundaries. Feminisms and the critique of knowledges* (Sydney 1988), 71-80.

[15] E.S.C. Handy, *Polynesian Religion* (Honolulu 1927), 38-48, 54; Elsdon Best *The Maori* (Wellington 1924), I, 93, 261; K.R. Howe, *Where the Waves Fall. A New South Sea Islands History from First Settlement to Colonial Rule* (Sydney 1984), 66.

women's participation and efficacy in daily life.[16] These have been more positive views of pre-contact Polynesian women's lives, although the intrusion of the West has been seen by Christine Gailey in particular to have undermined this earlier female efficacy and action.[17]

An exclusive focus on either interpretation ignores the fact that the two points of view cannot, without great ingenuity, be argued simultaneously. There is a stark contrast between the negative concepts of women's very being, and the positive, active roles they played in many aspects of daily life. If one were to accept as correct both interpretations, questions then would have to be asked: how were the negative concepts of womanhood and femaleness transcended? How were the seeming contradictions negotiated? I do not for one moment wish to suggest that communities of people create and live in conformity with universally accepted, homogeneous cultural norms. Contestation and conflict over the meaning and practical import of cultural expectations are inevitable, but they certainly demand acknowledgement and investigation. Hanson's innovative hypothesis that pre-contact concepts of Polynesian women positioned them in close association with the gods and supernatural realms, as potent and perhaps dangerous but not polluting beings,[18] makes possible a better integration between what were previously dichotomous and frequently mutually conflicting interpretations. The fit is not perfect nor would one expect it to be, but his interpretation encompasses the extant evidence more convincingly than previous analyses. In many of the Polynesian societies I have studied, and most clearly in Samoa and Tonga, I would argue that questions of gender (concepts, roles and expectations) in the most recent pre-contact times were matters of contestation as a male, patriarchal ideology was superimposed on what was previously a more female focused society.[19] Recent work on Polynesian women and gender relations has increasingly considered both ideological and sociological aspects of women's lives from pre-contact times to the present.[20] It is important to

[16] Christine Gailey, *From Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands* (Austin 1987); Linnekin, *Sacred Queens*. Linnekin's work is not however confined to a sociological interpretation.

[17] Gailey, *Kinship*.

[18] Hanson, 'Female pollution'.

[19] Ralston, 'Deceptive dichotomies', 72-3. See also Phyllis Herda, 'The Transformation of the Traditional Tongan Polity: A Genealogical Consideration of Tonga's Past', PhD thesis, Australian National University (Canberra 1988); Kerry James, 'Gender Relations in Tonga: A Paradigm Shift', in Phyllis Herda, et al. (eds), *Tongan Culture and History* (Canberra 1990), 93-100.

[20] Penelope Schoeffel, 'Gender, status and power in Samoa', *Canberra Anthropology*, 1 (1978), 69-81; Linnekin, *Sacred Queens*; Thomas, 'Unstable categories'; Nicholas Thomas, *Marquesan Societies: Inequality and Political Transformation in Eastern Polynesia* (Oxford 1990); Herda, 'The Transformation'; Ralston, 'Pacific Island women', 'The study of women',

investigate the tensions and ambiguities between the symbolic and material spheres and also the ways in which each sphere interacts and moulds the other. Neither of these spheres should be seen as separate or mutually exclusive.

From this background it is possible for me to elaborate more directly the theme of this paper 'Colonised Women', by which I mean both the physical colonisation of Polynesian women under the impact of the West and more particularly for this article, the intellectual colonisation through the representation of that experience by the colonisers over the period of the 19th and 20th centuries. No categorical distinction can of course be made between the lived experience and its representation, usually by others. Both are colonising processes in which Polynesian women have been systematically subordinated and denied the right to define themselves in public arenas, set their own agendas or exercise control over their own resources and labour.

Having just claimed that women were denied a number of basic rights it may seem contradictory to state that for much of the 19th and 20th centuries the very presence and needs of women were largely ignored. In most circumstances colonising officials educated and worked with Island men, while academics and other specialists who were also under the same colonial aegis conferred with Island men and depicted masculine worlds and life ways as though they were universal, encompassing both male and female. Not surprisingly Western colonials, both administrators and representers, used, or mentally referred to, models of property ownership, inheritance, marriage and male-female roles and relations derived from their own cultural milieu. Island models, which were markedly different from Western ones and in which women enjoyed some independence and recognition, were ignored.

All Polynesian women, with the exception of such renowned women leaders as Sālote of Tonga and perhaps Te Puea amongst the New Zealand Maori, suffered to varying extents from this invisibility and neglect, but for chiefly women who had exercised authority over certain resources and labour in pre-contact times, and who had figured prominently in societies where descent and inheritance were reckoned ambilineally, the changes must have been acute and rapid. For many they would have occurred in the early contact period before formal colonial rule was imposed. Foreign naval captains,

'Deceptive dichotomies', 'Polyandry, "Pollution", "Prostitution"'; Caroline Ralston, 'Introduction', *Journal of Pacific History* 22:3-4 (1987), 115-22; idem, 'Women Workers in Samoa and Tonga in the early twentieth century', in Clive Moore et al. (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific* (Townsville 1990); idem, 'Changes in the lives of ordinary women in early post-contact Hawaii', in Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific* (Cambridge 1989), 45-64; Elizabeth Wood Ellem, 'Queen Salote Tupou III and Tungi Mailefihi: a study of leadership in twentieth-century Tonga (1918-41)', PhD thesis, University of Melbourne (Melbourne 1981).

explorers, traders and later colonial officials expected to deal with male rulers and traders, and when faced with questions of inheritance to power or property they placed greatest weight on male primogeniture. The presence and previous roles of chiefly women were not recognised,[21] and their names and the names of their female forebears fell out or became obscured in chiefly genealogies as male Polynesian leaders manipulated those genealogies into line with Western expectations.[22]

The inculcation of Western domestic ideologies, particularly by the missionaries, affected all Polynesian women but most intimately those of commoner rank. These 19th century Western, Christian, lower middle-class views of wifehood and motherhood led in time to larger Polynesian families as pre-contact methods of sexual separation and abstinence, abortion and infanticide were proscribed.[23] These larger families increased the work required from women at the same time as there were fewer older siblings available during school hours for child care. New tasks such as sewing, washing and ironing clothes, cleaning an increased number of household items now deemed necessary adjuncts of Christian living, and finding money for consumer goods, school fees and other financial commitments were also added to women's loads.[24] At the same time all Polynesian women found that their range of activities, which once included vital contributions to and participation in major community activities, were more narrowly circumscribed into what the West has identified as domestic spheres.[25]

It seems to me that as this physical colonisation proceeded, the few scholars who considered Polynesian women either contemporaneously or at any time since the pre-contact period were over-influenced by the negative aspects that colonisation had more recently imprinted on Polynesian women's lives, and made assumptions from the present to the past. Given the more restricted nature of the women's late 19th and 20th century lives, the impoverished economic conditions in which the majority of them were forced to survive and rear their families, and the shocking rates of mortality and

[21] Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-one Years in the Sandwich Islands* (New York 1848), 87; Ralston, 'Introduction'.

[22] Niel Gunson, 'Sacred women chiefs and female "headmen" in Polynesian history', *Journal of Pacific History*, 22:3-4 (1987), 139-72.

[23] Sexual practices changed slowly and never completely, but the effect on completed family size was substantial. See Caroline Ralston, 'Women Workers'.

[24] Cema Bolabola, 'Women in villages: femininity, food and freedom', *Pacific Perspective*, 11:2 (198?), 65-7; Penelope Schoeffel, 'Women's Associations and rural development: Western Samoa and East New Britain', *Pacific Perspective*, 11:2 (198?), 56-61 and 'Women's Work and Development in the South Pacific', in Lyn Melville (ed.), *Women, Aid and Development* (Canberra 1984), 45-52; Pamela Thomas, 'Food for the gods or malnutrition for many?', *Journal of Pacific Studies*, 7 (1981), 37-80; Ralston, 'Women Workers'.

[25] See Ralston, 'Women Workers'.

morbidity in many communities, I believe most experts saw women's lives and position as depressed and subordinated, and assumed amongst other things that pre-contact gender relations and concepts of male and female were largely responsible for this state of affairs. Much of the evidence of women's pre-contact roles, powers and functions, chiefly presence, and participation had been effaced or lay undiscovered in the early primary literature, and in the absence of such evidence, negative interpretations concerning women have prevailed.

In the space remaining to me I wish to develop this argument in a little more detail rather than continue on what I recognise has been a dangerously generalised level. But even this particular analysis of the representation of Maori women in academic literature will have to be severely truncated. Prior to the 1890s Pakeha specialists interested in the Maori had been predominantly concerned with the collection, editing and publication of Maori myths and tribal lore.[26] With the founding of the Polynesian Society and publication of its journal, which celebrated its centenary of continuous publication in 1991, and pre-eminently with the publication of the early work of Elsdon Best, the 'academic' study of Maori culture was firmly established. I emphasise the word academic, because at this early stage few if any of the men involved had university qualifications: certainly Best had none. However the journal articles and the other publications of the 1890s and early 1900s were accepted as part of the established canon of work on the Maori and in subsequent decades were cited without hesitation or further investigation by university-trained anthropologists and historians.

Throughout the 20th century scholars studying the Maori have repeatedly turned to the numerous works of Best published between the 1900s and the late 1920s to provide evidence of past Maori culture.[27] Few were concerned to read Best in his entirety or recognised that both over time and even within one work Best was capable of presenting contradictory data and interpretations. In his early publications Best was scrupulous in identifying that the Tuhoe, amongst whom he had lived between 1895 and 1906, were the source of his data. But even when he prefaced his early publications with this statement, Best proceeded to write in very general terms. Women were rarely the focus of his attention but fragmentary information, usually out of context, appears throughout his work. In his earlier publications his representation of

[26] See e.g.: John White, *Ancient History of the Maori, his mythology and traditions*, 6 vols, (Wellington 1887-90); Sir George Grey, *Mythology and traditions of the New Zealanders* (London 1854); idem, *Polynesian mythology and ancient traditional history of the New Zealand Race* (Auckland 1885); S. Percy Smith, *Lore of the Whare Wananga or teaching of the Maori College on religion, cosmogony and history*, 2 vols (New Plymouth 1913-15).

[27] E.W.G. Craig, *The Man of the Mist: A Biography of Elsdon Best* (Wellington 1964), 231-8.

Maori women is frequently positive. Writing of Maori marriage in 1903 when his evidence came exclusively from the Tuhoe he claims:

> She [the Maori woman] was usually upheld by her people when she objected to marry a certain man who had desired or been selected for her. She was to a considerable extent independent and had a voice in matters affecting the tribe. . .. For a barbarous people the Maori treated their women well and gave them considerable freedom and authority.[28]

Best's inherent attitudes to 'barbarous' people and his tendency to generalise are clear. By the time of the publication of his two-volume work, *The Maori*, in 1925 Best's generalisations are more pronounced and thorough-going, while his representation of women has become systematically negative in tone if not always so in every detail:

> The crediting of light to the male line and of darkness to the female line, is quite in accordance with Maori views, for ever in native myth and belief the female sex is given an inferior position. Woman is allied with misfortune and inferiority as among other barbaric races.[29]

> The very fact of a woman passing over a tapu spot would pollute or destroy its sanctity, for such is the effect of that sex.[30]

I can only speculate about the reasons for Best's increasing negativity. The period 1900 to 1930 was one of acute economic depression, continuing land loss and high mortality and morbidity for many Maori.[31] Based in Wellington Best was in contact with Maori from many areas, not just the Tuhoe who had been more isolated from the impact of colonial rule than many other Maori groups. Popular interpretations of Freud may have confirmed Best's basic assumptions about the inferiority of women, especially among 'primitive' people.[32] The influence of the highly dubious Maori informant Whatahoro, on whom Best became increasingly dependent after 1910, may also have influenced his approach.[33]

Despite Best's highly negative view of Maori women as evidenced above, elsewhere in the same work he acknowledges that women of high rank, especially *puhi* and *tapairu*, were *tapu* persons, treated with much deference,

[28] Elsdon Best, 'Maori marriage customs', *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, 36 (1903), 41, 66.

[29] Elsdon Best, *The Maori* (Wellington 1924), I, 93.

[30] Ibid., I, 261.

[31] Judith Binney, 'Amalgamation and Separation 1890-1920', in Judith Binney et al. (eds), *The People and The Land. Te Tangata me Te Whenua* (Wellington 1990), 203-31.

[32] My thanks to Stephen Henningham at the Pacific history workshop, Canberra 1991, for this point.

[33] Craig, *Man of the Mist*, 157; M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations* (Auckland 1979), 47-50. See Sissons, *Te Waimana*, for a more general argument concerning Best's colonising impact on the Tuhoe.

often renowned chiefs commanding respect and support from their own and other tribes.[34] He fails signally to recognise the contradictions in the data he presents or the need to reconcile the more positive information about women with his profoundly negative representation of them. Later 20th century scholars have used Best's negative data, particularly from *The Maori*, where it predominates, without acknowledging that Best offers conflicting information which he refuses to analyse or attempt to integrate.

Having looked at Best in a little detail I am forced to consider a number of leading anthropologists and historians of the 1920s to the 1980s more cursorily.[35] In *Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, first published in 1929, Raymond Firth acknowledges that an *ariki* can be male or female, that *hapu* (sub-tribes) can be and are named after chiefly women and that in certain circumstances women did and do inherit land and other property, but his extended discussion of chiefly leadership is couched exclusively in male terms and Firth assumes that actual power and authority was and would be exercised by men.[36] Many of the primary published contact sources available to Firth in the 1920s are listed in his bibliography and cited in his footnotes, but he does not refer to the examples of female leadership and participation available in those sources, while his dependence on Best's works is extensive and uncritical. When it comes to conceptualising the nature of female roles in pre-contact times, Firth seems to have been largely influenced by the depressed contemporary Maori scene in which he did his fieldwork in the 1920s. Most interestingly, when he revised his work in the late 1950s he acknowledged the *emerging* and important leadership role Maori women were exercising through the newly established Maori Women's Welfare League, but he saw the role as new, not one that may have had historical antecedents.[37]

The only Maori woman to write about her people, until very much more recently, was Makereti Papakura, a Te Arawa woman, born in 1872 of chiefly descent. Her work on the Maori which was written in the 1920s and edited and published posthumously concentrates largely on material and domestic culture, housing, food preparation etc. She acknowledges the presence of women of high rank but when she discusses leadership and the exercise of authority she does so exclusively in male terms. Her work is unreferenced,

[34] Best, *The Maori*, I, 407, 453.

[35] Caroline Ralston, 'The representation of Maori women' (forthcoming paper).

[36] Raymond Firth, *Economics of the New Zealand Maori* (2nd ed., Wellington 1959, 1st ed. 1929).

[37] Ibid., 474, my emphasis.

without a bibliography and there is no internal evidence that she had any knowledge of the primary, early contact material.[38]

Te Rangihiroa (Peter Buck) in his major work published in the late 1940s *The Coming of the Maori* lists a minimum of primary historical sources, which are rarely cited in the text and, while recognising chiefly women in certain tribes and exceptional circumstances, argues categorically that:

> leadership in home and foreign affairs was exercised by males, and primogeniture in the male line was the deciding factor in succession to chiefly rank.[39]... When the first-born happened to be a female, the functioning position of ariki passed to the first-born male child.[40]

This interpretation promulgated by Firth and Buck became the orthodoxy until the 1970s and is still clung to by some even today.

The most profoundly negative views of Maori women were developed in the 1950s and 1960s and found their denouement in Berys Heuer's slim monograph *Maori Women* published in 1972. Before her, Prytz Johansen in the 1950s, working almost exclusively from the most negative evidence available to him from Best, and in keeping with the anthropological interpretations of Firth and Buck, developed a structurally dichotomised account of Maori women as dark, polluting and associated with death, in contrast to men who epitomised light, life-giving forces and *tapu* qualities.[41] The influence of structuralist thinking and pervasive dichotomies between male and female was developed further in the work of Bruce Biggs published in 1960 and Eric Schwimmer published in 1966.[42] None of the scholars mentioned above from Firth to Schwimmer was specifically concerned to elucidate the lives of Maori women. All with the partial exception of Makereti wrote generally of the Maori, but were in fact describing a male world and assuming it was universal.

With Heuer's *Maori Women*, the first monograph, albeit very brief (less than 50 small pages), to concentrate on Maori women was published.[43] A student

[38] Makereti [Makereti Papakura], *The Old-time Maori* (Auckland 1986, 1st published London 1938). I am most grateful to Dr Te Awekotuku, who has informed me by letter (July 1992) that editorial intervention into Makereti's thesis before its publication appears to have been substantial. Drafts of her thesis reveal that Makereti had done an extensive literature survey.

[39] Peter Buck (Te Rangihiroa), *The Coming of the Maori* (Wellington 1982, 1st published 1949), 343.

[40] Ibid., 345.

[41] J. Prytz Johansen, *The Maori and his Religion in its non-ritualistic aspects* (Copenhagen 1954).

[42] Bruce Biggs, *Maori Marriage - an essay in reconstruction* (Wellington 1960); Eric Schwimmer, *The World of the Maori* (Wellington 1966).

[43] Berys Heuer, *Maori Women* (Wellington 1972).

of Biggs and heavily dependent on the negative evidence available in Best's work, Heuer analysed Maori womanhood in what she claimed was a pre-contact and early contact time frame. In her first chapter, 'Cultural Attitudes towards Women', she presents three pages of negative instances from mythological evidence to construct a profoundly dark view of Maori womanhood. One five-line positive example at the end of the chapter cannot be said to lighten the picture.[44] From there Heuer proceeds to discuss marriage, procreation, socialisation, property, ritual functions and warfare. She admits that on rare occasions women were chiefs, but their political functions or the economic participation of women more generally in tribal affairs are ignored. She concentrates on the ideological concepts of women and seems to infer that the negative mythological evidence and the polluting nature of women, which she accepts without question, affected all aspects of their lives. She is therefore unable to reconcile the more positive evidence of women's activities that are mentioned in the work, and like Best before her, the negative images prevail. The book is a revision of her MA thesis completed in 1966, so any fieldwork done in association with it was probably undertaken in the early 1960s. There is very scant recognition of the positive tribal and sub-tribal roles Maori women had played in the pre-contact period or any time since contact.[45]

The works of the Maori anthropologists, particularly Maharaia Winiata and I. H. Kawharu, published in the 1960s and 1970s maintain the orthodoxy of male leadership and subordinated, restricted roles for women.[46] But in 1975 publications by Api Mahuika and Steven Webster seriously question the nature of descent reckoning amongst the Maori in pre-contact times, and highlight the important roles women had played, and in some tribes continued to play, albeit without public recognition or acknowledgement.[47] Since that time a number of anthropologists have struggled with the problem of descent reckoning and the role of women. Both Firth and Schwimmer have offered thoughtful revisions of their earlier positions,[48] and Joan Metge and Anne Salmond increasingly recognise the importance of women in genealogical

[44] Ibid., 9-12.

[45] Ibid., passim.

[46] Maharaia Winiata, *The Changing Role of the Leader in Maori Society* (Auckland 1967); I.H. Kawharu, *Orakei A Ngati Whatu Community* (Wellington 1975).

[47] Api Mahuika, 'Leadership: Inherited and Achieved', in Michael King (ed.), *Te Ao Hurihuri The World Moves On* (Auckland 1975), 64-85; Steven Webster, 'Cognatic descent groups and the contemporary Maori: a preliminary reassessment', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 84 (1975), 121-52.

[48] Raymond Firth, 'A note on descent groups in Polynesia', *Man*, 2 (1957), 4-8; idem, 'Bilateral Descent Groups. An Operational Viewpoint', in I. Schapera (ed.), *Studies in Kinship and Marriage* (London 1963); Eric Schwimmer, 'The Maori *Hapu*: a generative model', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 99 (1990), 297-317.

reckoning and current affairs.[49] With the exception of Salmond's *Two Worlds* published in 1991,[50] none of these anthropologists has gone back to the primary historical material to search for evidence to substantiate the data they have revealed from genealogical research. Judith Binney, however, in the introduction to her work *Nga Morehu* published in 1986 briefly examines the leading roles that Maori women have played from pre-contact times to the present which had previously been so largely ignored.[51]

Since the 1970s the tide of interpretation has slowly turned, although by no means all scholars of the Maori have been convinced. But as an increasing number of Maori women became more prominently involved in Maori activities from the level of extended families and local school boards through to national Maori associations and politics, particularly since the 1970s, so a growing number of scholars studying the Maori have acknowledged women's present roles, and some have begun to recognise that this contemporary involvement and exercise of leadership is not a new or Western-inspired development. In pre-contact times and with less public recognition in the late 1800s and first half of the 1900s Maori women have participated in tribal and community affairs, and their roles have deep genealogical and historical antecedents. Over-influenced by the impoverished conditions in which Maori people struggled between 1850 and 1950, Pakeha experts and Western-trained Maori experts during the same period failed to recognise that the subordination and restrictions imposed on Maori women's lives were never absolute, they were not the product of categorically negative concepts of womanhood derived from pre-contact times nor were they evidence that women had not enjoyed influential roles in the past.

Most recently the field of Maori studies and particularly Maori women's studies has been invigorated by the work and presence of the strong Maori feminist, activist and academic Ngahuia Te Awekotuku.[52] Trained in social sciences rather than in anthropology and with postgraduate experience in Hawaii as well as New Zealand, Te Awekotuku's PhD thesis completed in 1981 is an innovative study of the impact of tourism on her own people the Te Arawa, which includes a particularly insightful chapter on women and tourism.[53] The hallmark of this chapter and her many published articles is

[49] Joan Metge, '*Te Rito o te Harareke*: conceptions of the *Whaanau*', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 99 (1990), 55-92; Anne Salmond, 'Tipuna: Ancestors in Maori', typescript paper, University of Auckland 1988.

[50] Anne Salmond, *Two Worlds. First Meetings between Maori and Europeans 1642-1772* (Auckland 1991).

[51] Judith Binney and Gillian Chaplin, *Nga Morehu. The Survivors* (Auckland 1986), 24-8.

[52] Te Awekotuku, *Mana Wahine Maori*.

[53] Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, 'The Sociocultural Impact of Tourism on the Te Arawa People of Rotorua, New Zealand', PhD thesis, University of the Waikato (Hamilton 1981).

her telling analysis and exposure of the racist and sexist discrimination Maori women have experienced from both Pakeha men and women and some Maori men since contact with the West. Pakeha representations of Maori women are clearly identified by Te Awekotuku as part of this experience, the most reprehensible example being Heuer's monograph.[54] In principle Te Awekotuku sees no place for Pakeha in any aspect of Maori studies, be they feminist or not. It is clear, however, that she would like to know more about the Maori past. In the opening section of her most recently published book *Mana Wahine Maori* she writes:

> [The] ultimate aim [of Maori feminism] is a rediscovery and renaming of that essential strength and harmony, that complementary relationship between genders, that may have occurred on these islands two centuries past. We don't know that it was like that for sure, in the ancient Maori world; but we don't know that it wasn't either. And we can always hope.[55]

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku was one of the strong Maori women activists who fascinated me when I first started my Maori research two years ago. So at this point I come to my own involvement in the study of Maori women and the question which has haunted me for several years and which I posed at the beginning of this paper: is it inevitable that a white feminist writing about Polynesian women will continue to be part of the colonising process, which I have outlined above in the Maori instance? I have discussed elsewhere the anomalies that I perceive between the roles Maori women have taken in the forefront of the Maori renaissance since the 1970s and the restrictions placed on their right to speak in certain Maori contexts, particularly on many *marae*.[56] These restrictions are bolstered and at times directly legitimated by reference to the negative representations of Maori women in almost all the scholarly literature prior to 1975. What role, if any, does a Pakeha feminist scholar have in the representation and analysis of the current position of Maori women, or for any time in the past?

While in New Zealand between February and May 1991 I spoke with Maori women on many occasions and at length with some of them. All but two whom I contacted directly either by phone or at seminars welcomed what I was doing. I know, however, that there were other women who heard on the grapevine about my work and chose not to speak with me. Of those who were willing to talk with me and offer me information and insights into their own and others' experience, several were fascinated with the pre-contact and early contact material on Maori women's lives that I had unearthed, most of which

[54] Te Awekotuku, *Mana Wahine Maori*, 73.

[55] Ibid., 10.

[56] Caroline Ralston, 'Maori women and the politics of tradition', *Contemporary Pacific* (forthcoming 1992).

was unknown to them. But those who were opposed to my involvement, and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku was one of them,[57] questioned the right of a Pakeha feminist to investigate and write about the lives of Maori women at any period. Given the many inaccuracies and negative interpretations of Maori women in so much of the academic literature, and most particularly in the Heuer account which is still the only monograph available on the subject, I can understand the hostility and the belief that no Pakeha could get it right. Even more galling, in the process of getting it wrong non-Maori scholars have made careers for themselves, and monopolised debate within Maori circles, and white feminist activists have often attempted to impose their own agendas on Maori women.

My commitment is to be clear about the political and feminist concerns that influence my work, to elucidate similar influences as I perceive them in the work of others, particularly where they have not been deliberately articulated or understood, and to establish some of the evidence on which at least a limited picture of early post-contact culture and history might be built. In fact I believe I am providing some of the evidence that Te Awekotuku hoped for regarding those complementary gender relations of 200 years ago. My interpretation will always be partial in both senses of the word, but the data on which it is based are made available for others to re-examine and re-represent in their own light.

Jim Davidson continually emphasised the concept of Islander agency. In the pre-contact and post-contact periods, how did and do Maori or Polynesian women in general embody and make effective their agency? For times past can that agency be reconstructed? Today, can it be accurately represented, especially by white scholars? In postmodern idiom I believe I can offer a reconstruction and representation that is of course individual and open to re-evaluation and re-interpretation but one that, with the help of a number of Maori women academics, writers and informants and other scholars, will not mispresent, distort or diminish Maori women as seriously as has occurred in the past.

[57] I was unable to meet Dr Te Awekotuku in person while I was in New Zealand. I sent her a draft copy of the paper cited in footnote 56 on its completion in August 1991 and received from her a letter explaining her opposition to Pakeha who work in the field of Maori studies. Since sending this paper to the publishers and a copy of it to Dr Te Awekotuku as a matter of courtesy, I have received a very generous reply (July 1992) from her pointing out two factual errors, which I have corrected, one place where I appeared to be telling Polynesian women what they should do, which I have rewritten, and she also explained that in principle she objects to all non-Maori undertaking Maori research, not Pakeha feminists as an isolated category. She said, however, she is a realist and pragmatist and that Pakeha feminists are not on the top of her list of 'baddies'. I am most grateful to Dr Te Awekotuku for her advice and assistance, and for her appreciation of this paper.

TWELVE

Write History: Reel History

HANK NELSON

ON 29 MAY 1991 I was in Angau Lodge, the Australian National University house in Port Moresby. The other occupant of the house was a Japanese anthropologist taking a break from his fieldwork among the Biami. Just before 9.00 pm there was a last flurry of cars racing to beat the curfew, then the strange silence of a city without traffic. About an hour later there was a sudden burst of screaming and drumming. In every house people yelled and stamped on the sounding boards of raised floors. It set a thousand guard dogs barking. The noise rolled around the Boroko valley. The anthropologist and I looked at each other, went to the windows, and listened while the chorus of fear, anger or delight faded. Within a minute the squealing and drumming broke out again - from the suburbs of Korobosea to Gordons it flooded from louvre windows. Again the dogs barked, and again the sounds faded. After a while I guessed that it had something to do with the Australian State of Origin rugby league match. As we later learnt, in a last minute raid Benny Elias had passed to Ricky Stuart who gave a long pass to Mark McGaw who dragged desperate defenders across the try-line to level the scores. Michael O'Connor then kicked long and accurately to give New South Wales (14) victory over Queensland (12). Port Moresby's EMTV telecast three hours of live coverage from Sydney, and the people of Port Moresby watched and were passionately engaged in the battle of the Blues and the Maroons. On EMTV the State of Origin was more important than the dozen burnt-out government cars which then littered the campus of the University of Papua New Guinea, and had forced the closing of the university.[1] Many people in Papua New Guinea from different oral cultures have moved to one film culture with no intervening print culture.

[1] EMTV may have been reflecting general opinion in PNG.

DISSOLVE, shift scene 45 years back and 3,000 kilometres south to the edge of the Mallee in Victoria. Country and people have emerged from drought and war.

The identity of the Rex Theatre in Bertoli Street, Boort, was proclaimed in a curve of painted galvanised iron. The Rex was without carpets, it had no art deco curls, no fancy lights, no Wurlitzer organ, not an upright piano left over from the silent film days, and not even a chip from a plaster Greek column. The only decoration was the frame for the two posters, one for the support and another for the feature. The posters gave their invitations in a familiar language: 'Your heart'll be ringing with singing! Your knees'll be buckling with chuckling! Veronica Lake: Now everbody'll know that V.L. stands for "Violent Love".'[2] 'So smooth! So slick! So swell! Bing's really on the beam in this once-in-a-lifetime romance'.[3] But it was a language we never heard, and read only on film posters.[4]

Saturday night was 'flicks night' at the Rex, sometimes there might be a Wednesday movie, and if there was a special film - a spectacular, a glittering success, a film for all the family, a film like *The Robe* (1953), the first film in breathtaking cinemascope - it might be shown over two, and even three nights. But we were still keen on the black and white war films: films of men in grey uniforms, black Lancaster bombers in grey skies, grey ships in grey seas, and swelling patriotic music to tell us we were near the end and had been the winners: *The Wooden Horse* (1950), *The Cruel Sea* (1952), *The Dam Busters* (1954) and *Above Us the Waves* (1955). We saw Bing Crosby in *The Bells of St Mary's* (1945) but some sniffed and said it was just a bit of the Pope's propaganda, and we saw Bing and Bob Hope in *The Road to Bali* (1952). We laughed at *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951) and *Doctor in the House* (1952). We thought we knew a lot about Cary Grant, Alan Ladd, Jane Russell, Alec Guinness, Trevor Howard, Errol Flynn, and Doris Day, and we were learning about James Dean and Marlon Brando who seemed to make complicated the film star's simple job of looking good and entertaining millions. I remember *Bush Christmas* (1948) and *The Overlanders* (1950) but I doubt if I went to another Australian film at the Rex until *Jedda* (1955).[5] Like hundreds of thousands of other Australians I saw the documentary *The Back of Beyond* (1954). It was brought to Kerang High, and the images of Tom

[2] From the poster for *Isn't It Romantic* (1948).

[3] From the poster for *The Emperor Waltz* (1948).

[4] City kids who came to Boort to stay with an aunt or grandmother might use that language, and be able to imitate radio announcers and advertisements. We listened with envy and awe: that was part of what made them slickers.

[5] I suppose *Sons of Matthew* (1949) and *Bitter Springs* (1950) came to the Rex, but I cannot remember seeing them then.

Kruse's battered mail truck, the Birdsville Track and its people remained with me for longer than those of most features.[6]

We went to the flicks for fun, to be with the mob, to have something to talk about on Monday, and with hope of sex never realised. The closest we got to film criticism was saying that the British made better comedies - they were somehow cleverer - and the Americans made better musicals - they had the money, thought big and were lavish with the showbizz tinsel. I saw *The Third Man* (1949) and I was greatly impressed when a friend of my brother's played the Harry Lime theme on a banjo. I did not understand that Anton Karas's zither playing was an integral part of the film - for us the music was just part of the entertainment. No one talked about film music in any other way. No teacher thought to tell us about *The Third Man*, to say that here was a film written by one of the most interesting of British novelists who had already published some 10 books including *The Confidential Agent* and *The Power and the Glory*, and who had conceived *The Third Man* as a film. It was, Greene later said, 'never written to be read but only to be seen'.[7] We saw no drama on stage, other than local amateur productions. So it was not that we saw most professional acting on the screen - we saw all of it there. At school we studied Shakespeare, very English one-act plays,[8] Chaucer, Milton, anthologies of poetry, collections of short stories (sometimes with an Australian flavour - *An Australian Muster*) and the novels of Austen, Dickens, Hardy, Conrad and Henry Handel Richardson. We were well taught, and I enjoyed those excursions into the alien land of Wessex and the seascapes of Conrad, and those formal investigations of what writers said, how they saw people and place, how they chose their words, and shaped their sentences, paragraphs and books. But those thorough, careful, alien studies never came into contact with the films that we were seeing, and rarely with the lives that we led.

Television and I went to Melbourne in 1956. For the next eight years I did not live in a house with a television, and I knew little of what was shown on those small screens with the shaky vertical hold always threatening to send images somersaulting into chaos. Les Murray at Sydney University at the same time said he and his friends

> learned to drink wine, to watch Swedish movies, and pass
> as members, or members-in-law, of the middle-class ....[9]

[6] *The Back of Beyond* was made by the Shell Film Unit. The cameraman was Ross Wood and the writing was by Douglas Stewart and John Heyer.

[7] Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (London 1980), 122.

[8] The only play by an Australian which I can recall was Louis Esson's *The Drovers*.

[9] From 'Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato' (the Sydney University motto), *The Vernacular Republic: Poems 1961-1983* (Sydney 1988), 91.

I scored one in that list: I discovered Swedish movies, and went to the occasional French and Russian films then shown at the Australia in Collins Street. It was the European films that made us much more alert to the importance of particular directors with their individual values, recurring images and characteristic techniques. For the first time I read film reviews that were not taken from the publicity handouts of the production houses. But still there was almost no interaction between the literary and film worlds.

When I went teaching in country Victoria in 1960, television was yet to destroy the flicks. Numurkah with just over 3,000 people had two theatres (one was known and accurately described as The Tin Shed), and nearby in Shepparton there were several theatres and a drive-in. Once, consistent with its adventurous programming, the The Tin Shed put on Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957). When the subtitles came on someone stumbled to his feet exclaiming, 'Gawd! It's Eyetalian!' Some Friday nights we would flee the classroom, bursting out of the door and dashing down the linoleumed corridors ahead of startled pupils, jump in the FB Holden and be in Melbourne three hours later. I sometimes saw two consecutive film shows. But in the classroom I concentrated on the texts set out in the University of Melbourne *Handbook of Public and Matriculation Examinations*. So my students from Numurkah, Katamatite, Strathmerton, Yarroweyah and Cobram, some of whom were on their way to be teachers, did the compulsory sections from Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, made their choices from Austen, Brontë, Trollope, Conrad, Sinclair Lewis, Sophocles, Wilde, Shaw, Fry and Thornton Wilder, and rarely heard a word from me about what was showing on small or large screens.

Soon after I returned to Melbourne in 1963 television was telling Australians the news, making news, analysing it and laughing at it. For the first time Australians saw ordinary Australians on television in high quality contemporary drama, but there were few documentary films reflecting long research, a sharp, original vision, and a high craft use of the medium.[10] As a teacher of literature and history at a suburban high school and at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology I rarely mentioned television - where my students learnt much about the world beyond what they could see, and where they saw nearly all the fiction and fantasy to come into their lives.

At RMIT I did begin introducing students to serious film criticism. Jack Clancy, then writing about films, reading film magazines, and always adding to his formidable knowledge of film, was a fellow member of staff in the ancient high-ceilinged room where the junior members of the Humanities staff

[10] K.S.Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932-1983*, (Melbourne 1983), 225: '[Mungo] MacCallum's judgement after ten years of television was that Australia had not yet produced a single truly creative documentary'.

had their desks. He set the precedent, and informally extended my own education in film. I remember taking a class of science students, reluctant attenders at their one compulsory arts subject, down Swanston Street and into Bourke Street to the Odeon to see Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove* (1965). Later they talked enthusiastically about the ideas presented and the techniques used. For some it was a revelation that the events, the images, and the dialogue had purposes beyond getting laughs, and that they had looked at the product of highly skilled technicians and artists working to the limits of their combined capacities.

In Port Moresby in 1966 there was one theatre in the old centre of town between Paga and Touaguba: the Papuan - the Theatre of the Stars it called itself in *South Pacific Post* advertisements. It had opened in 1914 as an open-air theatre with its patrons in deck chairs, it had gradually acquired a roof, a stage, wide screen, and cinemascope, and finally it had discarded the deck chairs. The Arcadia theatre in Boroko was in a clutter of untidy shops, it opened off a gravel footpath, and was just a barn, but it had the most modern projection equipment, it was air-conditioned and showed first-release films.[11] But the most significant theatre was the Ward's Strip Skyline Drive-In. It had a licensed restaurant; people sat outside their cars in deck chairs or reclined, Roman style, on plastic banana beds; children wandered about; lightning flickered above Hombroms Bluff; and with the opening bars of 'God Save the Queen' some people shifted chicken dinners from their laps and stood, a few (including a senior member of the university staff) scrambled from their cars to stand, and others ignored the Queen, her horse and her guardsmen. The Drive-In was open every night, the Sunday show not starting until 8-30 p.m. so that it succeeded, and did not compete with, the evening sermon.

The Public Entertainment Regulations which had called for separate doors and seats for blacks and whites in theatres had been repealed in 1958, but few Papuans and New Guineans went to the Arcadia and the Drive-In, and at the Papuan there were usually more Papuan cleaners and projectionists than Papuan viewers. It was partly a matter of money and language, and partly inertia. Papuans and New Guineans who dressed well, went into the Papuan Theatre and chose good seats - in the ordinary manner of whites - were conscious that they were asserting their right to be there. Theatres with minimum facilities and showing ancient Westerns and martial arts films catered exclusively for Papuans and New Guineans: the Badili, The Bar X (near the Arcadia), and the Hohola. The theatres were like the hotels: the end of legal discrimination had allowed a tentative, uneasy entry of a few Papuans

[11] The advertisements said that the Arcadia had 'the Territory's first and only 70mm Showcase'. The history of the theatre buildings is given in Ian Stuart, *Port Moresby: Yesterday and Today* (Sydney 1970).

and New Guineans into clean, well-serviced white bars, but for most drinkers there was *de facto* segregation.

In 1968 the University of Papua New Guinea moved into new buildings at Waigani. Under its pyramid metal roof, the main lecture theatre with its rising ranks of orange seats, stained timber and solid grey concrete was a technical wonder. The acoustics were superb, and at the lectern was an array of switches to control sound, light and still and moving images. There was no projection box or beam of light: the pictures came by magic (and the handicraft of the Russian giant, Mike Zaitseff) on the translucent screen behind and above the lecturer. It was a theatre that invited its own exploitation. Ken Inglis began collecting slides, and a lecture rarely began without a quick shuffle through them. Starting with those dramatic photographs taken by J.W. Lindt in 1885, we had pictures to cover most of the course on History of Papua and New Guinea. The second written exercise for students taking it asked them to write what they could learn from an examination of the enlarged Lindt pictures hanging in the corridors of the History Department.

The fame, relevance and brilliance of the Ken Hall and Damien Parer film *Kokoda Front Line* led us to more films about the Second World War. The programme varied from year to year, but we would have Parer films on Kokoda, *Assault on Salamaua*, *Moresby Under the Blitz*, and the *Battle of the Bismarck Sea*, and American films such at *Attack! The Battle for New Britain* (1944) and *The Admiralty Islands* (1944) on the Allied invasions of southern New Britain and Manus. We put the films on at night, and people sat on the steps and stood on the doorway aprons, children slept on knees or wandered shyly. Students from all courses went, and so did gardeners, clerical staff, their families and people living in the nearby housing areas. I gave my introductions as briefly as I could, and as I watched the films I enjoyed the enthusiasm generated by the audience. The bombing of the *Macdhui* as it zigzagged desperately from the Port Moresby wharf always brought a chorus of exclamations, and there was a shout as it disappeared in blast, smoke and water-spouts. Brief glimpses of bewildered villagers caught in terrible violence provoked quiet expressions of sympathy.

Papua New Guineans went to the films because they were free, because there was not much else going on at night in Waigani, and transport into Boroko or Port Moresby was scarce. They responded for much the same reason that we had in Boort or Melbourne or Numurkah. We were fascinated to know how others had seen us. When we saw our country and ourselves in a medium dominated by foreigners we were increased in importance. And when the vision was intensified by craft and placed in a context we learnt more about ourselves. Sitting in my desk at Boort Higher Elementary School I had responded when in all that history of England and empire we were

taught about the Selection Acts, and I suddenly learnt something new about that grid of 320 and 640 acre blocks in which I worked and something new about the aspirations of all those cockies who battled bankers, Bathurst burr and weather. And when I read Frank Dalby Davidson about country Australia or about the Light Horse at Beersheba I felt an emotional engagement which just was not there when I read about Pip or Oliver or Heathcliff or Tess.

In the History Department at the University of Papua New Guinea we had used still and moving films to illustrate the spoken word, we had used both as documents, but we had not exploited film as much as we might have. In the English Department each course combined studies of language and literature. Students spent half their time on phonetics, phonemics, morphemics, syntax, lexicography and semantics, and the other half on New Writing from Emerging Nations and Modern World Literature. The students met many writers outside the Eng Lit line of descent from Chaucer to T.S.Eliot (Bertolt Brecht, Albert Camus, and J.P.Sartre); modern African writers (Chinua Achebe, F.Oyono and Athol Fugard); collections of Hindi and Bengali poets; Maori myths, and Indian and African oral traditions; and the novels of those outside national boundaries (V.S.Naipaul). Invited students could obtain credit towards an undergraduate degree by taking Creative Writing: they made their own contribution to written English.[12] It was literature of contemporary breadth but little depth, and the 'synchronic descriptive linguistics' seemed more impressive for its vocabulary than its practical use for students working in English as a second language. In spite of the emphasis on the modern, there was almost nothing about film or radio.

Even by the mid-1960s there was a significant history of film making in Papua and New Guinea. It was the frontier that had drawn Frank Hurley and other adventurer-filmmakers - as it had previously attracted Hurley to the Antarctic and the Northern Territory. The dramatic use of aircraft and the construction of the giant gold dredges in the Bulolo Valley were filmed in the 1930s.[13] The anthropologists, particularly Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, had made good use of moving film by the 1950s.[14] But all this was taking images from Papua New Guinea and displaying them to astonish and inform distant audiences. What we at the university had failed to exploit was the Papua New Guinean habit of film watching, and the government's production of films for Papua New Guineans.

[12] Taken from the *University of Papua New Guinea Calendar* of 1969.

[13] *Guinea Gold* (1932) and *The Air Road to Gold* (1933)

[14] Dr Rudolph Poch had filmed in New Guinea in 1904-6. Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead: *Bathing Babies in Three Cultures* (1952), *Childhood Rivalry in Bali and New Guinea* (1952), *First Days in the Life of a New Guinea Baby* (1952); Margaret Mead, *New Lives for Old* (nd). H.A.Powell, *The Trobriand Islanders* (1954).

After the war the Australian administration appointed a Visual Education Officer, sent 16mm film projectors to various centres outside Port Moresby, and planned a film lending library, the training of Papua New Guinean projectionists, and the production of 16mm sound films. Even in 1948 four projectors were in use outside Port Moresby, and in six months the Madang operator had put on 45 shows to audiences totalling 11,800.[15] By the time the university began teaching its first undergraduates, 25 Papua New Guinean travelling picture show teams, each with a generator, projector and a selection of films, were travelling the Territory. Eight of the teams had 'cine-vans', one had a 'cine-canoe', and the rest picked up rides when and where they could, sometimes taking to the walking tracks with the heavy generator slung on a pole. The government's film library held over 2,500 titles, and a commercial library in Port Moresby with a branch in Rabaul had another 900 16mm feature films for loan.[16] The administration film production unit made 10 films, plus some short instruction films, 8mm films and 35mm filmstrips. The 16 mm films included such riveting titles as *Tea in the Territory* and *Community Education*; but there were also films on a Southern Highlands ceremony (*Lusim Trabel Bilong Mipela*, 22 minutes) and *The Kula* (22 minutes).[17] The unit made 10 or so half-hour films a year over the next few years, and also filmed for Australian television.

The Commonwealth Film Unit frequently made documentary films in the Territory.[18] These began before the war ended (*Jungle Patrol* 1944) and continued in the aftermath of war (*Native Earth* 1946). The Commonwealth Unit made about one substantial documentary a year for 30 years,[19] and at times the Unit had over 20 employees on projects in the Territory. The Unit's films were intended to tell Australians about Papua New Guinea, and often

[15] *New Guinea Annual Report 1947-48*, 48, 91. Other 16mm projectionists were working from Wewak and Rabaul.

[16] *Annual Report for New Guinea 1967-68*, 172.

[17] I cannot find *Lusim Trabel Bilong Mipela* in catalogues. It may have been retitled. I have made particular use of Norman Douglas, 'Films for Pacific Studies: A Select List', *Pacific History Association Newsletter*, No 4, 1981, and Melissa C. Miller (ed.), *Moving Images of the Pacific Islands: A Catalogue of Films and Videos*, Center for Pacific Island Studies, University of Hawaii, Occasional Paper 34, 1989.

[18] It was the Department of Information Film Division, and became the Commonwealth Film Unit in 1956. Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years* (Sydney 1983), 193.

[19] Maslyn Williams, *Stone Age Island: Seven Years in New Guinea* (Sydney 1964), says that in his years of filming in Papua New Guinea from 1955 he made some 30 films - but this included several short, instruction films.

they were about Australians.[20] There were films on the work of various Australian government officers: *District Commissioner* (1963), *Neville Mendham, Agronomist* (1968), *Leon Fouche, Lands Officer* (1968), *Ron Shelly, Civil Engineer* (1968). But there was also *Kondom Agaundo* (1962) and *A Woman Called Gima* (1963), and *Peoples of Papua New Guinea* (1962). The Commonwealth Unit aimed to film in all districts, and at times it encouraged Papua New Guineans to direct the camera at what they thought was important.[21] The Unit started training Papua New Guineans in film making, and that became the subject of a film: *Simon in Australia* (1962). In *The Cruise of the Magi* (1962) there is an uneasy tension between the old South Seas stereotype of a languid island life and a new stereotype of Western markets and politics. Set on the southeast coast of Papua, the film follows the Co-operative's boat, and the viewers get to know all the Papuan crew and the Australian Co-operative's officer, Graham Caufield. The Papuan captain is shown as clearly in command of the boat, and Caufield makes comments about learning more than he teaches. The contrast with films made just a few years earlier is striking: in them the white man leads, teaches and commands.

One of the most ambitious of the Commonwealth Unit's films, *New Guinea Patrol* (1958), was written and directed by Maslyn Williams. Shot on 35mm Eastmancolour, it was technically superior, and Williams's prose-poetry commentary is indicative of the work which went into contriving this film of patrolling into new country in the west of the Southern Highlands. Maslyn Williams commented recently that the film was made to stop countries in the United Nations demanding that Australia give all Papua New Guineans the vote: the message was that there were still several thousand potential voters who were hard to find, and it would take time persuading them that the great gift being carried into their valleys was the right to vote.[22] *New Guinea Patrol* concentrates on the three Australian government officers, Jim Sinclair, Neil Grant and Bert Speer, but it transcends Williams's self-deprecating statement of aim. It is both a significant document and documentary.[23]

[20] In *A Time for Building: Australian Administration in Papua and New Guinea 1951-1963* (Melbourne 1976), 218, Paul Hasluck writes about 'attempts to extend Australian knowledge of and interest in the Territory' and later says: 'In making our first films, we were lucky to attract the personal interest and sustained enthusiasm of Maslyn Williams . . . he showed that he could work to our specifications and respond readily to our prescribed requirements and yet could build imaginatively and creatively to give the set task an extra quality of its own'.

[21] An example of this, Maslyn Williams says, was when they filmed canoe races at Hanuabada.

[22] Williams in conversation, 14 Nov. 91.

[23] It won several awards.

At the end of the 1950s the Territory's travelling picture shows and film production passed to the control of the Division of Extension Services, which became the Department of Information and Extension Services from 1961. In addition to its films, the Department had some 10 radio stations in the districts; they were run almost exclusively by Papua New Guineans; they took some programmes from Port Moresby but much material was local and broadcast in local languages, some of which had scarcely ever been seen in written form; they broadcast much service material about where boats were and what a savings and loan society was; they built up extensive stocks of local music; they distributed the first radio receivers to distant villages; and they received thousands and thousands of letters from listeners.[24]

Most of us at the university did not listen to its radio stations, did not see its film shows and were often unaware of its film making. When I went on radio, it was on the Australian Broadcasting Commission's 9PA which was still broadcasting 'Blue Hills', Jim Gussey's Sydney Dance Band, the Brisbane Stock Exchange and 'The Goon Show'.[25] In its school broadcasts, its brief Motu and Pidgin news services, and the voice of Sevese Morea as he presented 'Songs of the Islands', 9PA was different from other ABC regional stations, but it was really just the radio of the white population - the 'expats' - and a few Papua New Guineans around Port Moresby.

In the History Department we wanted to communicate with Papua New Guineans about things that mattered to Papua New Guineans: it was impossible to confront expectant Melanesian faces and talk about distant events, alien values and strangers. The same issue had been fought elsewhere: Indians had demanded a place in Indian history, Blacks in American history, and Africans in African history. Some of us had been involved in writing about Aborigines in Australian history. K.M. Panikkar's *Asia and Western Dominance* was a prescribed text in the first undergraduate history course.[26] We read scraps of African history, not because of the novelty of seeing Africans in their own history, but to see the way that it had been done. At the end of one lecture in 1967 an Australian student said to me, 'That was not history, that was a lesson in Papua New Guinea nationalism'. In fact it had been largely a simple description of the sorts of lives led by those Papua New Guineans who were in close contact with foreigners in the 1930s. It made no claims to be doing anything revolutionary: it was simply that the students responded to

[24] *Papua New Guinea Annual Report for 1971-72*, 236-7. Ian K. Mackay, *Broadcasting in Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne 1976), has an account of the establishment of the government stations.

[25] The programmes were set out expansively in the *South Pacific Post*.

[26] Ken Inglis brought Panikkar (first published 1953, new edition: Allen and Unwin 1959) to our notice in 1966.

hearing in another forum what they knew in fragments from anecdotes told by old mission catechists, returned plantation labourers and retired policemen.

But when we ignored film and district radio we missed the chance to use the media that were most able to communicate with Papua New Guineans; that Papua New Guineans not only heard and watched but responded to; and that was most under the direction of Papua New Guineans. We failed to put vitality into local radio and film which suffered from a lack of resources at Independence. We failed to form a habit of using radio and film within the university, something which would have been of great advantage when the university began its correspondence courses and regional centres. We left Papua New Guineans all that less able to exploit television to the national good.

AUSTRALIA at the end of 1972 had just had an election in which politicians and policies were most likely to be known through television. The next election was in colour and even more dominated by what was seen on the living room screen. Sport was changed by colour television. It was most obvious in cricket where the one-day game ended under lights to catch the maximum viewing audience, had the players in coloured clothes, changed rules to stop negative play, increased player payments, had cash prizes, and forced the game to end at the scheduled time, irrespective of what rain fell or streakers and cans cluttered the ground. Australian viewers continued their preference for Australian serials: in 'Number 96' it was a preference for Australian gossip, tits and sympathy for a homosexual. To the surprise of most Australians, feature films were being made: they were diverse and some of them were being watched: *Wake in Fright* (1971), *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), *Alvin Purple* (1973), *Between Wars* (1974), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), and *Don's Party* (1976). Around 17 feature films were released in both 1975 and 1976.

There was a lot of Australian history on large and small screens. On the ABC there was 'Rush', 'Seven Little Australians', and 'Ben Hall'. Many of the features were set in the past: *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *Break of Day* (1976), *Eliza Fraser* (1976), *The Getting of Wisdom* (1977), *The Picture Show Man* (1977), *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978), *The Irishman* (1978), *Newsfront* (1978), *My Brilliant Career* (1979), *Breaker Morant* (1980), *Gallipoli* (1981), *The Man From Snowy River* (1982), *We of the Never Never* (1982) and *Phar Lap* (1983) - just to pick out some of the main ones. That new form of film, the mini-series, shorter and with more continuity than a serial, longer and more episodic than a feature, was even more aggressive in its plundering of literature and history. There were mini-series on convicts, squatters, paddle steamers, German internees in the First World War, 1915, the bodyline tests,

Kokoda, Cowra, the raid on Singapore Harbour, cane-cutters, 'The True Believers' (of the immediate post Second World War), 'The Dismissal' (of the Whitlam government), and Queen Emma. Popular long-running serials set in the past, such as 'The Sullivans', turned out hundreds of hours of 'history'. For most Australian students entering undergraduate courses the icons and explanations of the past were becoming totally dependent on, or were being strongly influenced by, film - Captain Cook (mini-series), Burke and Wills (two feature films), Clancy of the Overflow (Jack Thompson in *The Man from Snowy River*), Gallipoli, Phar Lap, Bradman, Kokoda, Menzies, Petrov, and boat people (all films or mini-series). Any serious teacher had to be aware that the presumptions, the starting points, of the students came largely from film.

By the time that I taught undergraduate Pacific history at the Australian National University in 1990, the 20-year olds were the products of a screen culture. They watched their music: the video clip, pushing to the frontier of the technology of computers, cameras and publicists, was as significant in setting the style and signalling the target audience as the lyrics. When they went to buy a ticket for a concert or a bus, to draw money from the bank, to check their own student record, they expected to deal with staff who worked from a screen. They used the screens in the library to look for references. They were as ready to look at videos in the library as they were to use books; and they were more likely to borrow from a video shop than they were to take a book from a public library. They wrote their essays on screens, and handed in prose without spelling errors but which confused 'its' and 'it's', and 'practice' and 'practise'. (But the next spelling-checkers will be able to correct some errors of word choice and grammar.)

As the undergraduate of 1990 had grown up, the video games had moved to role-playing, interactive games with the player required to master much information and take complex decisions. They learnt arcane historical knowledge: the canal systems of early industrial England, the railway empire of J.P. Morgan, as well as the instrument panel of an FA 18 fighter plane. The new games made the players accustomed to using high capacity computers with effective sound systems. They were familiar with holding some frames, scrolling through information, and putting more than one image on the screen. Where we had competed with our peers to show our knowledge of the Hillman Minx, the Ford Zephyr, the Vanguard, and the Vauxhall Velox, these students knew the differences in chip and clock speeds of various computers and which had 80486 SX processors. In the brief gaps in their lives when they were out of sight of a screen they had their ears plugged into stereo sound. When in transit they belonged to a packaged aural culture. In 35 years students had shifted from three hours a week at the flicks to six hours a day in front of the screen.

I could not imagine one of those students of the 1990 class reacting with excitement to a magazine - as I had to *Nation* in 1960. Published fortnightly, priced one shilling and six pence, *Nation* had just words on the cover, and what words of news, interpretation and irreverence on the inside![27] But then my presumption was that the greatest wit and learning was written.

From the early 1970s it was obvious that Australian history was going to be presented on screen, and the screen was to be the dominant source of information of most of the population. But the quickening speed and the comprehensiveness of that process were not predictable. Those revolutionary changes for historians have been outside the control of historians. The option for historians has been whether or not to change what they have been doing.

One of the first films that I planned was to be on the Second World War in New Guinea. It was to centre on Shaggy Ridge, named after Shaggy Bob Clampett of Adelaide. Shaggy Ridge is cut by torrents and scarred by landslides, it is kunai grass with troughs and crest of rainforest, and it is the barrier between the broad Ramu Valley and the coast south of Madang. The whole area is wet with mist for days. From October 1943 until the end of January 1944 Australians, Papua New Guineans and Japanese fought on and around Shaggy Ridge. There was sporadic contact between small patrols, sustained battles and the use of artillery and aircraft. Papua New Guineans were used by both sides as soldiers, carriers and informants. I could imagine filming Shaggy Ridge at different times of the day and in different weather, the camera lingering on the slopes that were scaled with bamboo ladders, and on the ridge-top so narrow that the front line could be just one-man wide.[28] I knew that in 1943 there had been a movie cameraman at Shaggy Ridge, there were still photographs, and diverse peoples waited to be interviewed. I hoped to move backwards and forwards in time from Shaggy Ridge to say general things about the war in Papua New Guinea, and about those who were fighting it and entangled in it. I tried to interest someone in making 'my' film.

'Shaggy Ridge' was never made, but many of the ideas went into the different and broader *Angels of War* (1982). That film was made because of the coincidence in the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History at the Australian National University of three of us with complementary skills. I had a topic; Gavan Daws knew about writing for film, crafting a film to reach an audience, and he was familiar with much of the special vocabulary of film

[27] K.S.Inglis (ed.), *Nation: The life of an independent journal of opinion 1958-1972* (Melbourne 1989).

[28] There is a detailed account of the fighting in the Australian official history: David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives* (Canberra 1961). There are relevant unit histories, e.g. John Burns, *The Brown and Blue Diamond at War: The story of the 2/27th Battalion*, 2/27th Battalion Association (Adelaide 1960); and James Sinclair, *To Find a Path: The life and times of the Royal Pacific Islands Regiment*, Vol. 1 (Gold Coast 1990).

making; and Andrew Pike had sufficient technical skills to talk to cameramen, editors and sound engineers, he had contacts in the industry to recruit people of competence; and he and Gavan could gather the funds. For me, the great advantage was involvement - from conception, to gathering stills and contemporary footage, to filming and through post-production. Where possible we brought activities to us. Stewart Young's deft fingers cut the film.

Angels of War was one of several documentaries on Papua New Guinea produced immediately after Independence: *Trobriand Cricket* (1976), *Yumi Yet* (1977), *Ileksen* (1978), *Kama Wosi: Music of the Trobriand Islands* (1979), *Namekas: Music in Lake Chambri* (1979), *Malangan Labadama: A Tribute to Buk Buk* (1982), *Gogodala: A Cultural Revival* (1982), *Sharkcallers of Kontu* (1982), *First Contact* (1983), *Tighten the Drums: Self Decoration among the Enga* (1983), *The Red Bowmen* (1983), *Cannibal Tours* (1987), *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* (1989), *Senso Daughters* (1990), *Man Without Pigs* (1990), *Cowboy and Maria* (1991). The list is not exhaustive[29] but demonstrates the quantity and the importance of recent publishing on film about Papua New Guinea. It may be that the best publishing on some subjects has been on film. The list concentrates on the work of Robin Anderson, Bob Connolly, Gary Kildea, Les McLaren, Dennis O'Rourke and Chris Owen, all of whom were in Papua New Guinea for long periods, learnt Tok Pisin, and were prepared to spend months in the field to get the raw footage, and months in the editing room to shape the content accurately and elegantly.

Regular telecasting began in Port Moresby in 1987, but before that many people had dishes to trap signals from Australia and elsewhere. Papua New Guineans were going to watch television whatever the policies of the national government. In May 1991 the *Post Courier* Television Guide carried the programmes of three stations: QTV from North Queensland showing much the same programmes as Capital 7 in Canberra, the ABC from Queensland, and EMTV.[30] The 'local' station, EMTV, is managed by an Australian and operated as an Australian regional station: viewers breakfast with the 'Today Show' in Sydney, see nothing but a test pattern until 'Midday with Ray Martin' begins (strangely) at 2.15 p.m. They can then look at such shows as 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles', 'The Flintstones', 'A Current Affair with Jana Wendt', 'The Young Doctors', 'Flying Doctors', 'Australia's Funniest Home Video Show', 'Charlie's Angels', 'Hawaii 5-0', and even 'Gunsmoke'. On rare evenings there

[29] One film that I wanted to include was Michael Parer's *Voices in the Forest*, but I could not locate a copy, and perhaps it was made just for television, and exists in the ABC archives.

[30] For a joining fee and K40 a month Hitron provides citizens of Port Moresby with access to a movie channel and the possibility of satellite feed from Australia, New Zealand, USA channel 10 and CNN, Tahiti, Malaysia and the Philippines.

is a half-hour popular show produced in Papua New Guinea - such as 'The Great Morobeen TV Give Away Game Show'. For the rest, from 4.00 p.m. there is about one hour of locally filmed material, nearly all of it news. The first four news items might be based in Papua New Guinea before taking film from CBS and other overseas services. What most distinguishes EMTV as Papua New Guinean are the station identifiers of spectacular and varied local scenery, the public announcements ('9th South Pacific Games - 104 days to go', 'National Walk Week') and the advertisements: *Tru Kai Rice, Em Nau! Yakka- gutpela klos bilong ol man. Save hatwok.* And other advertisements in Tok Pisin for Paradise Biscuits, Pine-o cleen and toothpaste.

There is a massive imbalance of film in and film out. Papua New Guineans can choose to watch two Australian channels, but if they watch just EMTV they might see two hours of Australian television in peak viewing times. Australians might see film from Papua New Guinea for an average of one minute a night. That is a ratio of 1:120. The population of Papua New Guinea measured against that of Australia gives a ratio of 1:5.[31] There is virtually no movement of film to counter the two or three hours of television made, some time in the last 30 years, in the United States and shown nightly on EMTV. Papua New Guineans gain most of their knowledge of Australian and American history - and of other aspects of those national cultures - from film. There is almost no Papua New Guinean history, and little serious contribution to Papua New Guinean culture in any form, on Papua New Guinean television.

THE consistent theme through these reminiscences - paced at 24 frames a second with the occasional jump cut, dissolve, and tricky continuity - has been the gap between the formal print-based scholarship of the classroom and the informal learning from moving pictures. As sources of information, as examples of arts and high craft, the flicks passed before our uncritical eyes at The Rex. (The only criticisms were cries of 'Come on Strat' when the film broke and images of golden syrup trickled down the screen. 'Strat', mechanic by day and theatre manager and projectionist at night, cursed, cut a clean edge, and the film, short of a few frames, went on.) By 1991 changes in the way films were made and transmitted had greatly increased the importance of film in the spread of information, as examples of the narrative form, and as a medium for the performing arts. And the rate of change has been quickening.[32] In Port

[31] Australians probably see about as much television film from New Zealand as they do from Papua New Guinea.

[32] In the *Age* Green Guide, 21 Nov 1991, p.21, there is a note about a new CD ROM: 'A recent release was *Desert Storm*: a multi-media rehashing of the Gulf War put together by *Time* magazine. For $69 you get hundreds of *Time* reports, photos and tape-recorded interviews, as well as sights and sounds of the battlefields: personality and country profiles; weapons summaries; maps and charts, speeches by president Bush and Saddam Hussein

Moresby EMTV now offers to pay viewers K30 for news or 'human interest' videos: the Australian's paragraph in the *Bulletin* of the 1890s may, 100 year's later, become the Melanesian's clip on national television.

Some historians must make films. From *Angels of War* and working in different ways on other films, I learnt that someone else was as likely to make 'my' film as they were to write 'my' book. If they did it, they made it theirs. Historians who want to be involved in films have a choice about the level of their involvement. They can operate as a resource for filmmakers, answering specific questions about the colour of Australian soldiers' uniforms on the Kokoda Trail in September 1942 (some were khaki, some green and all had tan boots), and whether Captain Cook normally wore his hat as he walked the deck. Film is different from the loneliness of writing: it is co-operative, different skills are required and the technology forces compromises - it is too noisy to record sound at the selected site, the film cassette runs out at the critical point, and cloud suddenly changes the light in the middle of an engrossing interview. But undoubtedly the most satisfying involvement is at the level of producer/director - keeping close to all activities and always having the right to influence, if not command.

Some historians confuse arguments over film with debates about high and low culture, about the ephemeral and the lasting. As with writing, fiction on film can be escapist nonsense or it can be a combination of craft and insight which becomes art. As with writing, history on film can be superficial or it can be based on long and detailed research; it can be addressed to a large audience or it can be for a select few. As with writing, some detailed research into a significant topic can be presented so that it reaches a large audience. When it does, that audience will be 100,000,000, an audience level reached by a few of the recent films on Papua New Guinea.[33] By contrast a 'best-selling' book produced in Australia on the Pacific might have sales of 20,000.

Ken Burns's 11 hour, nine part television series, 'The Civil War', has just demonstrated the capacity of film to reach large audiences. It was the highest rating show ever to be screened on the American Public Broadcasting Service: it had 40,000,000 viewers. It has been shown on BBC2 and sold to Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Israel . . .. In Australia on SBS it had 12% of the audience, SBS's highest rating, beating World Cup Soccer and 'Seven Up'.[34] 'The Civil War' used no actors (except for their voices) and had no simulated battles. It

. . . even the full text of the Geneva conventions'.

[33] That sort of figure is reached when a film is shown on television in Great Britain, some other European countries, Japan, Canada, Australia and cable television in the USA.

[34] Some of this information comes from the 28pp pamphlet issued by SBS at the launch of the film, and the claim of a 12% audience was made by the SBS publicity department in answer to a telephone query.

relied entirely on photographs and sketches from the time, and the camera roved at length on the land where armies camped, marched and slaughtered. In spite of the hundreds of books on the civil war, Ken Burns's film, for good or ill, will now be the dominant source of American students' perceptions of the war.

It is not just that films reach more people, they are also seen by more people with professional expertise. The one-hour documentary directed by Chris Owen, *Man Without Pigs*, was reviewed more widely around the world, and at greater length than would have been the case with an equivalent monograph. The standard of reviewing was also higher than for a monograph such as *With its Hat about its Ears: Recollections of the Bush Schools*, partly because several reviewers demonstrated that they knew a lot about the crafts of film making. Many book reviewers do not bother to comment on the prose and structure.

Pacific Islands historians who make films have a chance to return the product of their research to the people they have studied, and in a more accessible form.[35] The Islanders can, and do, make their comments to the screen, and to the filmmakers.[36] It is a moment of pride for people of small language groups to hear their own language coming from the speakers, and to know that those familiar combinations of sounds will be heard in distant places by unknown peoples. Although filmmakers carefully select what they show and they place it in a particular sequence which influences the values an audience places on any one scene, the subject speaks directly to all who see the film. No writer can present the accent, the emphases, the confidence or diffidence, the health, the dress and the context with the accuracy that a film offers. And in a film all that is presented within seconds.

Most films require the co-operation of those filmed. Where filmmakers are working with, say, the 1,000 Sulka speakers of East New Britain, they will almost certainly need a Sulka with some knowledge of what they are doing to work alongside them in the field, and to be present when they edit. That person will influence how the film is made. The filmmakers may also choose to ask the people at various points what they think is important and what they would like to say. Writing, such an individual craft, is less open to co-operative ventures, especially with those who are articulate only in the language of the village.

[35] Papua New Guineans have circulated pirated videos before film makers can get to Port Moresby, and video copies continue to circulate after the first official screening.

[36] I have written at length about filming and showing film in a village in 'Pictures at Tabara', *Overland*, 109 (1987), 6-14; and about differences between writing, radio and film in 'Presenting the Product', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 5 (1982-1983), 91-8.

One of the most important reasons why historians should be involved in film is simply to enable them to be more alert to using, and being critical of, the films of others. The films ought not to be just additional (and less scholarly) sources of information. They will often be the best, and ought to be given close criticism - of what they say and how effectively they say it. We have a duty to our students who see so many films to teach them to read films critically. They will learn more, and enjoy more.

If we accept that film making is a high craft, and can present the results of scholarly research in a compact form, then it follows that we should allow some students to present the results of their doctoral studies on film. The thesis will then be, at least in significant part, a video cassette. To assess the work of a thesis on film, an examiner will have to be told about the help of others with editing, photography and sound, but in many of the sciences doctoral research is a group activity, and the publications stemming from the research have joint authors.

It is often said that we only understand our first language when we learn another. A writer who starts working in another medium is certainly made conscious of the peculiarities of writing, of the way writing pushes research in certain directions, forces a particular shape on the raw material, and even influences the way events are explained. When constructing a narrative on film, the editor is physically taking pieces of film and joining them together. If the continuity comes from the flow of images then a form of explanation is being presented to the viewers - one event is leading to another. But the same thing is done, less consciously, in writing, and it is the filmmakers who have taught the writers to be more episodic, to use flashbacks, and make viewers or readers more aware of parallel events.

In film it is common to have an event of 40 years ago on screen and then cut to a participant who gives a personal account. In written history the actual event of 40 years ago is often recreated by fusing together contemporary reports, reminiscences, and the historian's reasonable presumptions. Even the most meticulous writer cannot footnote the source of every fact and opinion. But in film there is often a tension between the event and the reminiscence: both are subjective (the work of filmmakers) and both are documents, and they are open to more divergent interpretations than prose. We are all editors of our own memories, and sometimes on film we see a person struggling to mould memories to make them more acceptable to their owner, and whether we feel compassion or contempt, we are enlightened.

Filmmakers sometimes create an event, film it, and then present it as a manifestation of present attitudes and a comment on the past. In *Angels of War* the men who had been carriers on the Kokoda Trail walked straight up to the camera and made their aggressive, confident statements. They had gathered at Popondetta market because the filmmakers had invited them,

there were many of them, and they competed for the right to speak. The crowd, the occasion, generated its own particular emotion, and the film reflected that. In separate interviews in quiet surroundings, the speakers would have presented much of the same material, but in a different style, and with a different impact on viewers. But every interview, whether recorded on film, sound tape or paper, has its own dynamics. Two people meet in a particular setting and what questions are asked, what answers are given, what emphases and detail pass between them, are partly determined by their personalities and values and extraneous factors - the pet cockatoo screeches or the Test cricket murmurs on the background radio. Different interviewers talking to the same people will always obtain slightly different information and impressions, and sometimes they will come away with significantly different results.

Finally, I want to make it clear that I think historians should always be writing, trying to write better, and gaining great enjoyment from fine writing by others. I just want historians to use other media, reach more people, communicate better with students, and perhaps in the process produce better history - on pages, sound tapes or film.

THIRTEEN

Reel Pacific History: The Pacific Islands on Film, Video and Television

ROSALEEN SMYTH

> Historians must take an interest in the audio-visual world if they are not to become schizophrenics, rejected by society as the representatives of an outmoded erudition.
>
> (Pierre Sorlin)[1]

OVER THE PAST 20 years or so academic historians have been taking an increasing interest in the audio-visual world.[2] The stimulant has been television and the vast amount of historical material it uses in the many documentaries that have appeared, particularly since the 1960s. But the interest has also been fired by the use being made of video and television by activists anxious to promote their version of the past for present political purposes; looking for the limelight in the national and international arena

[1] Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History; Restaging the Past* (Oxford 1980), 5.

[2] Some of note are: A. Aldgate, *Cinema and History: British Newsreels and the Spanish Civil War* (London 1979); J.A.S. Grenville, *Film as History; The Nature of Film Evidence* (Birmingham 1971); A.Elton, 'The Film as Source Material for History', *Aslib Proceedings*, 7 (London 1955), 207-39; K. Fledelius, 'Audio-visual History-the development of a new field of research', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 9:2 (1989), 151-63; P. Griffin, 'Film, document and the historian', *Film and History* (1972), 1-10; *Journal of Contemporary History: Historians and Movies: the state of the art I-II* (Vols 18/3, 19/1, 1983/84); J. Kuehl, 'Television history: the next step', *Sight and Sound*, 51:3 (1982) 51:3 (1982), 188-91; V.M. Magidov, 'Film documents: problems of source analysis and use in historical research' first published in the Soviet historical journal, *IstoriyaSSR 1* (1983), 92-103, published in English translation in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 4:1 (1984), 59-72; C. McArthur, *Television and History*, BFI Television Monograph No. 8 (London, British Film Institute, 1980); A. Marwick, 'Archive film as source material' (The Open University, *War and Society* course, Milton Keynes, 1973); N. Pronay, B. Smith and T. Hastie, *The Use of film in History Teaching* (London 1972); C.H. Roads, *Film and the Historian* (London 1969); P. Smith (ed.), *The Historian and Film* (Cambridge, London & New York, 1976); Sorlin, *The Film In History*.

using the most powerful propaganda weapon of our times - film and television. And in many countries the limelight is there. Old consensuses have broken down, television thrives on controversy, the expression of diverse and minority views is, in many instances, encouraged. Hidden histories and untold stories are welcomed by ratings-seeking television stations and by government broadcasting stations with public service responsibilities. Indeed, it is part of the remit of Britain's Channel Four to publicise minority viewpoints.

The first significant contribution to the debate about the relationship between film and history was made not by an historian but by Siegfried Kracauer in *From Kaligari to Hitler* (Princeton 1947). Television has forced the issue by making increasing use of historical film. Ever since 1964 when BBC-2 showed *The Great War*, its 26 part series about the First World War, historical television series have scarcely been absent from our screens. Historians have been driven from the sidelines and forced to take part in this communications offensive - in defence of their turf, the interpretation of the past; and to ensure that the game is played by the rules - that the history being communicated by film and video is accurate, and that it be subject to the same scrutiny as written history.

In this chapter I will look at some issues of significance in the debate about the relationship between film and history, in the context of the reel history of the Pacific Islands. Reel history includes documentaries, the newsreel and its heir, television current affairs programmes, television mini-series, video documentaries and feature films. The historical scope extends from early films such as the German documentary *Völkenkundliche Filmdokumente Aus Der Südsee* featuring the Caroline Islands, Chuuk (Truk) and the Bismarck Archipelago (1910), Frank Hurley's travelogue *Pearls and Savages* (1921) featuring Papua, and Robert Flaherty's Samoan idyll *Moana* (1926) up to recent video documentaries on Papua New Guinea such as *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* (1989) and *Man Without Pigs* (1990). It includes the latest current affairs interview by television journalists with some leading political player in the drama of Pacific current events which will become tomorrow's history - one example of which is the Television New Zealand (TVNZ) interview with Major General Sitiveni Rabuka in June 1991.[3] Also part of the cinematic terrain are Hollywood's romantic dramas such as *Blue Hawaii* (1961), *The Blue Lagoon* (1948 and 1980) and *Return to Blue Lagoon* (1991), *Hurricane* (1937 and 1979); war dramas like *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) and Australian television mini-series such as *Queen Emma of the South Seas* (1988) and *Tusitala's Tales*.

[3] 'Frontline': Interview with Major General Sitiveni Rabuka (26 June 1991).

The Communication of History Through Film

In 1922 Lenin described the cinema as 'the most persuasive of all the arts'. We have seen how adroitly the cinema was used in Nazi Germany, the emphasis placed on the newsreel in propaganda to reach the masses in World War II, the role of television in the Vietnam war. More recently the part played by television in presenting 'history as it happens' has been reinforced by the role of Ted Turner's 24-hour Cable News Network (CNN) in presenting the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union - climaxing with the resignation, on television, of Mikhail Gorbachev. If history is a society's collective memory, increasingly since television our collective memory is made up of visual images. If film is the great communicator which reaches out to the mass of the population, then should not historians be making more use of film and video?

Consider the size of the audience when shown nation-wide on Australian television of, for example, John Pilger's *The Secret Country* (1985) about the fight back by Aborigines for recognition of their land rights, or *Joe Leahy's Neighbours* (1989) about the conflict between Mick Leahy's unacknowledged son by a Papua New Guinean woman and his Papua New Guinea neighbours over Joe's entrepreneurial approach to traditional clan land. And then reflect on the audience reach of the brilliant American documentary television series *The Civil War* (1991). When it was shown in Australia alone, this nine-part series not only broke SBS's ratings records but found an enthusiastic audience among most age and occupation groups [4]- demonstrating that first-class academic history can also have mass appeal.

Some historians are taking up the challenge, striding on to the electronic stage to communicate history to mass audiences in the proliferating history documentaries on television and video. There have been, for example, Basil Davidson and Ali Mazrui on Africa, and the majestic BBC Television series *Triumph of the West* by historian J.M. Roberts. Two excellent examples from the Pacific are *Angels of War* (1982) about the experiences of Islanders during the New Guinea campaign in the Second World War and *First Contact* (1983) about white penetration of the Papua New Guinea Highlands in the 1930s.

What these films and many others are doing is using a complex new language - cinema expression, an indissoluble combination of picture, movement and sound - to reconstruct the past. Despite the different language, film language, the makers of film history, like the conventional historians of the print media, are all motivated by some idea about the purpose of history - to show how it really was; to rewrite history from the bottom up; to put a minority viewpoint or a woman's eye view; to decolonise colonial history by

[4] E. Simper, 'Oh what a lovely war - a lesson in documentary-making', *The Weekend Australian*, 28-29 Sept. 1991.

viewing it through an ethno- as opposed to Euro-centric lens; or to promote national consciousness.

How it really was

The camera can provide physical evidence; it can show you what the Highlanders looked like at the time of first contact in the 1930s. The reality is, none the less, subject to 'creative treatment' by the hidden hands of the camera operator, the filmmaker and the editor. The most obvious case is the compilation documentary where you may have an old silent film plus a new sound track, plus still photographs, interviews with yesterday's witnesses, the subtle manipulation of montage and the commentary directing the viewer in a certain direction. But at the simple level of how things looked - at a surface level - and given the selectivity of the camera - a film can, using a different language from the traditional historian, uniquely, capture day to day life, giving us a concrete vision of situations, however imperfect the vision. Inevitably, images are ambiguous.

To rewrite history from the bottom up

The driving force behind much of 20th century history writing is the desire to put the ordinary person into history. Film can record the lives of ordinary people; it can give the illiterate representation in the historical record. There are the images of the Papua New Guineans from the Sepik complaining so waspishly in *Cannibal Tours* (1987) about affluent tourists who spend so little on their carvings. There is the story of the people of Banaba (Ocean Island), the exploitation of the phosphate resources of their homeland and their displacement to Rabi Island in Fiji for the greater good of the British Phosphate Commission and the farmers of Australia and New Zealand in that very powerful BBC indictment of colonialism *Go Tell It To The Judge* (1977). *Ilekeson* (1978) captures the unique vitality of electioneering on the Papua New Guinea hustings in Papua New Guinea's first elections in 1977.

To give the minority viewpoint

The presentation of minority viewpoints is becoming increasingly possible not only because equipment has become cheaper and more flexible but because in democratic, plural societies, television companies consider it part of their role to promote the viewpoints of minorities. Minority groups, naturally, are seizing the opportunities offered to publicise their cause. The Aboriginal viewpoint no longer suffers from lack of exposure in contemporary Australian interpretations of the past. A recent contribution to the hidden history genre which also emphasises the connectedness of mainland Australian and Pacific Island history is *Gammin Paradise* (1992) shown on Australia's ABC television in January 1992. The film about Melanesian labour migration to the Queensland plantations between 1863 and 1906 emphasises the evils of

labour migration (Gammin = a lie). Melanesians were either taken against their will ('blackbirding'), or tricked by stories of a paradise that awaited them on the sugar plantations of Queensland into leaving their own paradises in the islands of the Solomons or the New Hebrides, the film reports. There is a re-enactment of blackbirding and strong input from a prominent Australian, Faith Bandler, a descendant of a labourer from the New Hebrides.[5] The conditions on the plantations were likened to those on the slave plantations in the United States. The film has been produced as part of a campaign for compensation from the Federal Government for the descendants of the Melanesian labourers who remained behind in Australia when the era came to an end. The political struggles of Kanak militants in New Caledonia were given exposure on Australian national television in the ABC co-production *April Moon Over Canala* (1988); and in the New Zealand Film Commission's *Kanaky Au Pouvoir* (c.1988).

The feminist movement has inspired many reappraisals of the past in print and film to redress the balance of male-dominated history. *Senso Daughters*, written, narrated and produced by Noriko Seguchi, a young Japanese woman of the post-war generation, focuses on the hitherto 'untold story' of the use of women - Japanese, Korean and Papua New Guinean - as military prostitutes during the Japanese occupation of Papua New Guinea during the Second World War. The video documentary the *Indo-Fijian Women of Suva; the Untold Story* (1991), written, produced and narrated by Indo-Fijian sociologist Shaista Shameem, looks at the problems faced by Indo-Fijian women from their arrival as indentured labourers on the canefields of Fiji, through the racial discrimination of the colonial period up until the present day when many continue to be exploited in garment factories and as sex industry workers.

To replace a Eurocentric voice with a Pacific voice

One characteristic of the era of decolonisation which peaked in the 1960s was the demand that colonial history should be presented from the point of view of the colonised and not portrayed as the exploits of Europeans in exotic climes. In the case of the electronic media complaints about electronic colonialism are not confined to ex-colonies. There has been a global backlash against the cultural imperialism of the American film and television industry: the media are American. The demand for local film and television production

[5] Bandler has published three semi-fictional accounts of the lives of Islanders in northern Queensland and southern New South Wales: *Wacvie*, (Adelaide 1977); *Marani in Australia* (Adelaide 1980); *Welou My Brother* (Sydney 1984). See Clive Moore, 'Pacific Islanders in Nineteenth Century Queensland', in C.Moore, J. Leckie and D. Munro (eds.), *Labour In The South Pacific* (Townsville 1990), 144-7, for an overview of the written literature.

and for localisation of content has come from such players as the United Kingdom, France, the EC countries as a body, Canada and Australia - all are battling with varying success against the American entertainment juggernaut. The demand for a voice for the small, economically dependent island states in the hugely expensive electronic media faces greater obstacles.

In film and television productions made since independence in the various Pacific Island countries, the anti-colonial rhetoric characteristic of the era of decolonisation is often present. More often than not, such films are financed by former colonial powers, and scripted, produced, directed and narrated mainly by Europeans from the Pacific Rim: Australia, New Zealand, the United States - with some input from Britain. Traditionally the European voice-over in documentaries of the colonial era has been male. In post-colonial productions the script is, occasionally, written or the film narrated by an Islander but generally it is not so much the Pacific voice in the sense of an Islander speaking, but more the voice of a foreigner, usually European, frequently male, speaking on behalf of Pacific Islanders, or interviewing Islanders - whether it be about the impact of television; about nuclear issues; the impact of Christianity on traditional religion and cultures; or about the lost 'innocence' of the Pacific as island nations are caught up in the politics of the great powers in the Pacific.

The promotion of national consciousness

A number of videos have been produced to promote such issues as indigenous sovereignty, nationalism and land rights for Australia's Aborigines and New Zealand Maoris. Of the same ilk is the ABC co-production *April Moon over Canala* (1989), a promotional film for the Kanak resistance movement. The April of the title is April 1988, a month of vigorous Kanak militancy which ended in tragedy but also, the film suggests, inspired greater militancy. At Canala, in April 1988, the FLNKS (Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front) boycotted the French presidential and regional elections; and, on the island of Ouvea, Kanak militants attacked a police post, killing three gendarmes and taking 27 hostages. The French struck back, sending in special forces who killed all of the 19 Kanak militants, with the loss of two of the French strike force.

The narrator, Australian Jill Emberson, surveys the battle between politics and tradition emerging in Kanaky. Caught between two worlds, the Kanaks are trying to rescue tradition by tying it to the political struggle. Linked spiritually to the land but deprived of it by French settlers, they are forgetting the songs which bind them to the land. They endeavour to re-learn old songs while creating new ones about Kanaky resistance hero Eloi Machoro, who with Marcel Nonaro was shot by gendarmes in 1985, and the massacre at Hienghène in 1984. The eclecticism of the Kanaky struggle is demonstrated

by borrowings from international revolutionary traditions and Carribbean music. 'Eloi Machoro is their Che Guevara.' One of the films principal informants, Kiki Bugoa, who 'walked out of the kitchen to join the barricades' in Canala in April 1988, is breaking with the traditional female role by taking an active part in politics. The late Jean-Marie Tjibaou who, says Emberson, understood that unity is made of contradictions, is shown making a speech at a custom ceremony about the importance of custom in overcoming political divisions.

The film stresses the links Kanaks have with Vanuatu, Fiji, the Solomons and with those Australian Aborigines who visited Canala and left behind strong memories. 'We made the custom and I saw that our customs resemble each other.' One day, muses the narrator, perhaps the Pacific will see the birth of Kanaky.[6] The tragic epilogue to *April Moon over Canala* is that on 4 May 1989, at Wadrilla village on Ouvea, after a custom ceremony to mark the end of a year's mourning for the Kanaks who had died during the French hostage rescue, Tjibau and Yeiwene Yeiwene were killed by a more extremist member of the FLNKS.

WHATEVER our definition, whatever purpose we see in history, film has a role, but it has its limitations. It has vividness and immediacy, but it is not reflective. Film seizes on the personal, the sensational, and it oversimplifies. Films are unable to figure concepts, they only show individuals. An historian who finds two or more versions of an event has more opportunity in written history to evaluate the merits of each. The camera provides us with short-hand visual imagery for contemporary history, but we have to look behind these images that have been manipulated to give the appearance of actuality. There is ambiguity in pictures which have a wide range of meanings at the same time. It is in written history that we have the opportunity for precision, for complex analysis and for evaluating the merits of competing interpretations. Film enriches our understanding of and reconstruction of the past, without making written history obsolete. But while written history may never be obsolete, it is reel history - history as reconstructed on film and television - that reaches the mass audience.

The Use of Film as Historical Evidence

From the early 1980s there has been an increasing recognition of the value of film as a source of evidence for colonial history. In 1982, the InterUniversity History Film Consortium and the Imperial War Museum sponsored a

[6] *April Moon Over Canala*, produced and directed by Michael Dearon in association with the ABC and Point du Jour, 1989.

conference on the 'Film and Empire' at the Imperial War Museum in London. In 1983, the Second Australian Film and History Conference featured three papers discussing Papua New Guinea film history: two about the documentary *First Contact*,[7] the third about the making of Damien Parer's *Kokoda Frontline* (1942) - a study in editing and its role in the creative interpretation of actuality.[8] Another paper, with a post-colonial theme, was about the dangers of television delivered via satellite technology which, it was argued, would destroy the 'innocence' of Pacific Islanders unprepared for the seduction of Western images.[9] In 1988 the British African Studies Association introduced a segment on African film; its American counterpart did likewise in 1989. In 1990 at the Pacific History conference in Guam a paper on 'Images of Micronesia on Film and Video' with an emphasis on American influence and involvement in Micronesia after World War II was presented.[10]

Evidence of surface realities and significant events

The special value of film as historical evidence is in the images it provides of surface realities and significant events of the past and the insights it can provide into the mentality of particular periods.

In the Pacific cameras have been busy providing physical evidence of 'exotic cultures' since almost the beginning of documentary film history. The word documentary was first used by John Grierson to describe Flaherty's *Moana* made in Western Samoa. The documentary *First Contact* (1982) directed by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson contains footage of film taken by Mick Leahy in the 1930s. He and his brothers were the first white people to enter the Papua New Guinea Highlands. The film uses the footage and interviews with the remaining Leahy brothers, and with Highlanders who remember their expedition, to comment upon this contact. Some of the most memorable images were the reactions (in the original footage) of the Highlanders to their first exposure to the gramophone and the aeroplane and the reactions of present day Highlanders to that same footage: 'they'll keep this picture for each generation to see so that they can say to each other, that's how we used to be'. Many criticisms have been levelled at this fascinating award-winning documentary. It has been argued that the camera angles and interview format

[7] John Lechte, 'Film as image and document in ethnohistory', in W. Levy, G. Cutts, S. Stockbridge (eds), *The Second Australian History and Film Conference Papers 1984* (Sydney, Australian Film and Television School, 1984), 44-59; and Ron Burnett, 'First Contact: the ethnographic film as historical document', ibid., 60-78.

[8] Neil McDonald, 'Journey to Kokoda - The Making of "Kokoda Frontline"', ibid., 137-58.

[9] Michael Bongiovani, 'Pacific Islands: tuning in to the communications Nirvana', ibid., 94-106.

[10] James Mellon, 'Images of Micronesia on Film and Video', paper presented at the 8th Pacific History Association Conference, Guam, 4-7 Dec. 1990.

discriminated against the Highlanders; that the film was a 'romantic depiction' of what was really a brutal encounter; and that 'there is no insight into the socio-political affairs of the blacks' or hint of the harsh exploitation of cheap labour.[11]

First Contact is an excellent illustration of both the power of the medium and its limitations. Its strengths are its vividness and the strong impact it makes on its audience. For a more profound analysis of the realities of the first encounter of the Highlanders with white colonialism you need to go to the written sources. Mick Leahy's camera caught the surface reality of aspects of that historic first contact - physical appearances, body language, dress, the landscape; some visual and therefore ambiguous images.

There is a rich reel history of the Second World War in the Pacific to be found in such films as the *Legend of Damien Parer* (1963), *Kokoda Frontline* (1942), *Angels of War* (1982) and *Senso Daughters* (1990) which feature Papua New Guinea; and *Guam: The Legacy of War* (1984), *Payoff in the Pacific* (1960) and *Victory at Sea* (c. 1945) which focus on Micronesia. Fiji National Video Centre's *Programme No. 6* includes archival footage of Fijian troops being welcomed home from active service by Ratu Sukuna.[12]

One significant feature of Pacific history since first contact is the cargo cult. *Cargo Cult* (1960) from the BBC's The People of Paradise Series is about the Jon Frum cargo cult in the New Hebrides. The film opens with a dramatic shot of a cross planted atop a volcano on the island of Tanna in the New Hebrides. A very young David Attenborough offers a rational explanation of the origins of seemingly irrational cargo cults, as told to him in New Guinea. White men in uniforms arrive on your island, they drill, and tune into radios with masts, they drive jeeps, wear glasses, have fountain pens, but they don't make these marvels themselves. They arrive as cargo by plane and boat. You figure that if you behave like these godlike white men, wear uniforms, march up and down, clear airfields, put up antennae, then planes and ships will arrive showering you with similar cargo. After indicating the geographical spread of cargo cults in the Pacific, Attenborough looks in detail at a New Hebridean cargo cult, the John Frum movement, which developed on Tanna in response to the arrival in 1941 of American troops with their profusion of material goods. He questions Tannese and a European trader, notes the incidence of scarlet crosses encased in palisades, an airstrip prepared for the landing of a plane and a wooden mast in the middle of a field. Attenborough finishes his investigation of the John Frum movement at the headquarters of the cult in the village of Sulphur Bay adjacent to the volcano crowned by the

[11] Burnett, 'First Contact', 73.

[12] FNVC [Fiji National Video Centre] Presents: Programme No. 6 includes 'Fiji Battalion Comes Home', 10 min. (with Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna).

scarlet cross. After interviewing Nambas, the cult's leader, Attenborough concludes that he is either 'mad or a rogue'.[13]

Of similar interest as a film record of the history of Vanuatu is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Fella Belong Bush* (1973), which documents the land rights struggle that started on the island of Santo in the 1960s. The film focuses on the bitter resentment of the indigenous people at the continued presence of the British and French in the New Hebrides. It narrates how the people have been driven from their coastal villages by European planters into the bush, becoming 'Fella Belong Bush', and how Jimmy Stevens, a man of mixed race origins, organises what in nationalist historiography would be described as a proto-nationalist resistance movement. Stevens leads a group that is proposing that all the 'dark bush' (uncultivated land) be returned to the people, while the foreign planters retain land used productively. The fact that Stevens was later in 1980 to lead an unsuccessful secessionist movement on Santo at the time of Vanuatu's independence adds to the historical interest of this film.

The independence celebrations in the various Pacific Islands produced an interesting crop of films, many made by Film Australia, documenting this rite of passage. Some of the Solomon Islanders interviewed during *Solomon Islands Regains Independence; (Tu Mi Naos)*, 1978, expressed doubts about the readiness of the Islands for independence. A public awareness campaign was in progress over the period during which the film was made to explain the meaning of independence to many Islanders. The film also documents a rift between the western and eastern Solomons, with the westerners claiming that more money was being spent on eastern development. Many in the west would have preferred state as opposed to the projected provincial government. Of particular interest is the special attention paid in the film to the veterans of the Maasina (Marching) Rule movement.[14] Aliki Nonohimae, the founder of the movement, talks about the unity and brotherhood the movement brought and the imprisonment and exile of some of its members: 'We are receiving Independence today because of Marching Rule and I am proud'. The film proved to be 'controversial in the host country because of the film's allegedly strong anti-colonial sentiment and some errors of fact'.[15] (It is also notable for the quality of Dean Semler's cinematography. Semler went on to win the 1991 Academy Award for cinematography for *Dances with Wolves*.)

[13] See 'Cargo Cult', in D. Attenborough, *Journeys to the Past* (Harmondsworth 1983), 97-116.

[14] Maasina is the Malaitan word for brotherhood and is sometimes anglicised as Marching Rule. A protest movement against British rule, with elements of the cargo cult, Maasina Rule started on Malaita in 1945 and spread to Guadacanal, Ulawa and San Cristobal before it died out in 1952.

[15] N. Douglas, 'Films for Pacific Studies: a select list', 24.

Film Australia's *Vanuatu: struggle for freedom* (1981) not only has scenes of the ceremonial preparations and highlights of the great day, including a reception hosted by the then Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrew Peacock, but filmed records of the progress of the secessionist movement commenced on Santo by Jimmy Stevens. Stevens leads his bushmen into the streets and declares the republic of Vemarana. Vanua'aku Pati representatives Barak Sope and Sol Melisa are refused permission to land on Santo and the rebellion is only put down eight months after independence with the assistance of forces from Papua New Guinea. Others in Film Australia's independence series are: *Kiribati? Here We Are* (1979), *Yumi Yet: Papua New Guinea Gets Independence* (1977), and *Independence for Fiji* (1970).

History of mentalities

i) Documentaries

Documentaries are not innocent of manipulation. Since the earliest days of the genre, documentaries have been devised to promote a particular point of view. In the subject that is chosen as much as in the treatment of that subject they reflect the attitudes and concerns - the mentality - of the times in which they were produced. Colonial and post-colonial documentaries often manifest different concerns and have different points of view because they are products of a different age. Time marches on; attitudes change; films become historical documents and help us to reconstruct those times and get inside the mentality of that age.

This point is illustrated in the changing point of view in the films made by Australia's Commonwealth Film Unit, later reborn as Film Australia. And there is more than a change in name; there is a change in focus. Many of the films of the Commonwealth Film Unit were about Australia's former ward, Papua New Guinea. Films made during the 1950s and 1960s portray the trustee fulfilling its obligations towards its wards.

Typical is *Papua and New Guinea* (1957) which shows the steps taken by the Australian Department of Territories in the Joint Territory of Papua and New Guinea 'to blend the best of native life with the best of European life'. This includes the 'abolition of tribal war, establishment of health and educational services and the encouragement of agricultural improvement'.[16] Another is *Way to a New World* (1959) which shows the work of the Australian administration in Papua in bringing a new way of life to the 'natives'. The film notes the trade of fish from the coast for vegetables from the inland; the importance of sorcery, and initiation ceremonies; and the dominance of the old men of the tribe.

[16] Ibid., 37.

> But the old way of life is changing. Subsidised mission schools are bringing education, public health measures are being introduced, new commercial crops such as coffee and cocoa are being grown, cooperatives formed and elected local government councils set up.[17]

These films in tone and subject matter are very similar to public relations films sponsored by the British government in support of its administrative record in its African colonies and by the government of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in support of its administration of native affairs in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi). [18]

After the winds of change had blown away old empires, the colonial retrospective began. From the 1960s a new wave of filmmakers trained their lenses on the effects and, particularly, the negative effects of colonialism. Film Australia adopted a new tone to suit the temper of the times. By the early 1980s, the Pacific Islands were being depicted as pawns in the power politics of the Great Powers. Film Australia, in its *Human Face of the Pacific* (1983) series, essays an earnest examination of the colonial legacy. Trusteeship is out and exploitation in. The 'great powers' have used the Pacific Islands to further their own military and political agendas and are intent upon economic exploitation. Paradise has been polluted and it is the fault, the implication is, of the foreign intruders, traders, missionaries and the colonial powers.

Dennis O'Rourke, co-producer of the *Human Face of the Pacific* series, has made a number of documentaries on the theme of the ill-effects of colonialism in the Pacific, including the widely praised documentary, *Yap: How Did You Know We'd Like TV* (1982) - marketed by the Australian film distribution company, Ronin Films as:

> Dennis O'Rourke's witty and disturbing documentary about the introduction of American TV (complete with ads for carpet shampoo and Cadillacs) to the small Pacific island of Yap, on the eve of the island's independence. A brilliantly perceptive view of cultural imperialism at its most cynical and blatant.[19]

But, as we have seen, images are ambiguous. While O'Rourke's point of view certainly had a receptive audience in Australia and elsewhere, the film did not receive such an enthusiastic reception from the film's subjects. The people of

[17] Ibid., 51.

[18] The links are even personal. Alan Izod, of the Films Division of Britain's Central Office of Information which, like the Ministry of Information before it, had the responsibility for the production of propaganda films about the Empire, started the Central African Film Unit (CAFU) in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1948. One of the film directors of the CAFU, Denys Brown, later succeeded Izod as head of the CAFU and later still came to Australia to head the Commonwealth Film Unit.

[19] *Films on the Pacific*, Ronin Films, (Canberra, n.d.).

Yap did not appreciate being depicted as a group of television-watching zombies, helpless victims, unable to control their own destiny. [20]

Two films made in Papua New Guinea, *The Shark Callers of Kontu*, produced by Dennis O'Rourke in 1982 with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission, and *Gogodala*, made in 1977 by Chris Owen of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, reflected contemporary anti-colonial sentiments. The particular focus is the near fatal impact of commerce and Christianity on pre-colonial culture. *The Shark Callers of Kontu* is almost of the paradise lost genre. The elders of the village are lamenting the passing of the ancient skill of shark calling as the last person in the village with the power to pass on the *mana* has died. The new generation is not interested. The sympathy of the filmmaker is with the older generation, not only as evidenced by the commentary but by the editing which continually cuts from the heroic Heminqwayesque man and fish combat of the shark callers in the open sea, a combat that is steeped in ritual, to images of the new order: a Christian church service, school children learning to read from a book soaked in consumer culture with sentences about shopping for milk shakes, lollies, orange drinks and tooth paste. In times past, laments a village elder, when their god was not the Christian god, but Moroa, our custom and religion were connected. The times are out of joint.

Gogodala, an earlier production, has a similar theme. The coming of the Unevangelised Fields Mission in the 1930s to the Gogodala people in the southwest of Papua New Guinea had, 'as elsewhere in the Pacific', led to a 'long haul into decay'. Gogodala dances, carvings and the custom of up to 500 people living together in a long house had ceased. The resulting 'cultural vacuum' is deplored by a European museum worker, amongst others, and efforts are made, with indirect financial assistance from the Whitlam Labor Government in Australia, to bring about a cultural revival, which includes, the construction of a long house as a cultural centre. There is a note of disapproval in the voice of the narrator at the way in which re-learned dances now performed at festivals (a colonial inheritance) have degenerated into spectacle and 'pop culture'. It is apparent also that although there has been something of a revival of wood carving, the carvers are more interested in obtaining money for the carvings than doing them purely as part of the sponsored cultural revival.

Two films made in Fiji in the late 1960s indicate something of the mentality of that time - just before independence in 1970. In the Australian ABC television production *The Other Side of Paradise* (1968c.) the narrator explains that after the Fijian chief Cakobau had ceded his country to Queen Victoria, 'kindly advisers' who were 'in sympathy with Fijians' natural dislike of hard work' introduced Indian indentured labourers to work on plantations. Many elected to stay after their indentures had expired with repercussions that have

[20] Pers. comm. Fran X. Hezel, SJ, Suva, 12 Nov. 1991. See also Mellon, 'Images of Micronesia'.

invaded every aspect of Fijian life. Europeans, says a local European resident, admire 'the dignity and gift of laughter' of the Fijians, whereas the Indians are described as 'an austere Asiatic people' with 'a disinclination to adapt at all to the Fijian way of life'. The entire country is in the hands of largely Australian monopolies. Sugar, gold and beer production are all controlled by Australians. Even the organisation of the production of artefacts by 'natives' for tourists is handled by Europeans. The Fijians who own 83.6% of the land will never agree to give it up, says the commentator. If Indians want land, says one Fijian, they can go to Australia where there is plenty; otherwise Fiji will end up like India where everybody is starving.

Trade unions are racially divided; one reason given is that Indians have the higher positions. (Despite this statement there had been in 1959 an oil workers strike which had seen co-operation across ethnic lines.) During the film Apisai Tora,[21] one of the organisers of the 1959 strike, appeals for greater militancy amongst the people. They should challenge the power of chiefs who believe that only they have the right to govern. If it is the last thing he does, says Tora, he will change that. James Anthony, another key figure in the 1959 strike, complains of the lack of 'political dynamism' and an 'atmosphere of oppression'. Controversial issues are not discussed so 'Fiji drifts into a malaise'. Ratu K.K.T. Mara, leader of the Alliance Party, says that racial division is a fact of life in Fiji. An Indian spokesperson is critical of the fact that there is still no common name for all Fijian citizens and blames the Europeans for the absence of a sense of nationalism in Fiji. Indians are critical of the new constitution established in 1965 which brought in multiple voting for the Legislative Council; the system, designed to maintain a racial balance, is considered unfair. A European argued that Europeans are not over-represented but represented according to their management skills. Europeans recognise that 'they are only nightwatchmen for the country'. Despite the problems in the nether side of Paradise 'blood is most unlikely to run in the streets of Fiji', the narrator concludes. *The Other Side of Paradise* has never been shown in Fiji.

The Three Legged Stool, produced for the Australian-owned Emperor Gold Mining Company in 1967, promotes multiracial harmony: Fijian, Indian and European elements are interdependent like a 'three legged stool', in the phrase of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna. Each is needed for the present and future happiness of Fiji. The commentary emphasises the changed status of the indigenous Fijians since the arrival of other races and the establishment of the colonial state. Fijians need money and can no longer survive purely on subsistence farming. 'No longer do they have these lands to themselves; all races now share . . . the ways of their forefathers are a thing of the past . . . the Fijian, whether he likes it or not must move with the times and compete with Indians and Europeans.' 'How capable is he of doing this?', asks the narrator. 'How dependent is he on others for help?' 'The world does not owe us or anybody

[21] Now president of Fiji's All National Congress Party.

a living.' What is needed is 'intelligent investment' such as, for example, the Australian-owned Emperor gold mine at Vatakoula. That wealth under the ground was not doing anybody any good until Australian investors brought 'know how' which in turn provided the colony with revenue and jobs, particularly for indigenous Fijians. 'The principle source of stress and strain in Fiji today', the narrator continues, is that the Indian population is increasing more quickly than the Fijian; they have a higher fertility rate and a higher proportion of females are born. Several years earlier, a Fijian had petitioned the government to introduce compulsory birth control - only for Indians. The film concludes that there is 'a degree of amity and toleration in Fiji that would never be met anywhere else the world over in a multi-racial society'.

A film is uniquely equipped to stimulate emotional involvement and complement intellectual understanding with physical perception. The mentality of colonialism, that special attitude of racial superiority, has a particularly potent impact when it is seen - recorded on film, as it is in *Half Life: A Parable for the Nuclear Age* (1986). This compilation documentary, produced by Dennis O'Rourke, is about the US Atomic Energy Commission's testing of a hydrogen bomb, the Bravo test, on Bikini Atoll in 1954, and the impact of that test on the inhabitants of the Marshall Islands. The film includes archival footage about the testing for radiation levels of seven Islanders at the US Atomic Energy Commission's Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago. The camera pans across and then zooms in on a group of pleasant-faced Islanders, 'these are fishing people, savages by our standards', who are standing patiently, albeit somewhat uncomfortably in heavy winter clothing, as they wait to be tested. The camera focuses on John, the mayor of Rongelap, as he looks steadily into the camera:

> John is a savage, but a happy amenable savage whose grandfather ran almost naked on his coral atoll. Whitemen brought money and religion and a market for his copra...John reads and knows about God and is a pretty good mayor.

John puts on a white gown and enters the iron room for radiation detection of human beings. This is his first visit to 'the white man's country', and he and the other Marshallese have been treated to a ride on a San Francisco cable car, and shown Chicago skyscrapers and trains. Now John is being measured for radiation in the iron room:

> A savage governs his life by ritual and he understands this because he thinks of it as a new ritual. The shoe covers left on one side of the bench. Sitting alone inside the room, outside a strange kind of priest in a long white coat. A long, lonely wait inside while outside the new ritual is completed...When the ritual of the iron room was over for John it began for the others until one by one they had all gone through it. As each finished he was told it was over and he was given apples and other good things to eat. And the seven men put on the suits and top coats they had been lent in Hawaii, which they would return in Hawaii, on their way back to the islands of

> Utirik and Majuro in Rongelap atoll in the Marshall Islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean where hardly anybody lives.

It is the detached manner in which the voice-over is delivered during the 'ritual' that provides so lucid an insight into the mentality of a time not so long past.

ii) Feature films

The feature film, too, provides insights into the history of mentalities. A whole swathe of imperial epics were made by American and British companies in Africa and India extolling the virtues of British imperialism - films like *Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935), *Rhodes of Africa* (1936), *The Drum* (1938) and *King Solomon's Mines* (1937). In contrast to the Indian and African imperial epics, Hollywood films about the Pacific Islands, made in the colonial and post-colonial era, have presented hypnotic images of romantic South Sea paradises inhabited by handsome men and beautiful women who with the lush scenery, the sun, the sea, the beaches, the rain and the hurricanes, provide an exotic, beguiling and sometimes dramatic backdrop for the adventures of Europeans. Feature films such as *Blue Hawaii* (1961), *South Pacific* (1958), *Hurricane* (1937 and 1979), *The Blue Lagoon* (1949 and 1980) and *Return to Blue Lagoon* (1991), the *Bounty* films and the Australian television mini-series *Queen Emma of the South Seas* (1988) are all examples of this paradise genre.[22] The genre has its antecedents in the journals of European explorers, the writings of Pierre Loti, Margaret Mead and many others, and the canvases of Paul Gauguin.

Cultural imperialism as symbolised by the American entertainment industry is seen as a threat to national cultures in many parts of the globe. But given the high costs associated with the production of film and television dramas, the universal comprehensibility and popularity of the American product, and American control of distribution networks, cultural colonisation by the United States (and some smaller players in its wake) appears destined to continue. The production of a critical mass of fiction narratives for television and film to replace American, Australian, French films and, in the case of Fiji, the dominance of films from India, is an impossible dream for small, economically dependent Pacific Island states. What will be possible is the production of a comparatively small number of low budget dramas for local consumption as the equipment becomes more flexible, costs lower, and greater numbers of Pacific Islanders acquire technical and production skills. It is in these dramas that Pacific Islanders can occupy centre stage instead of

[22] Hollywood's treatment of the Pacific in feature films is covered in E. Rampell (ed.), *South Seas Cinema: Lights! Camera! Islands!* (in press).

being relegated to the periphery as is customary in the Hollywood or indeed Australian commercial product.

During the colonial period two films made specifically for local audiences, *Two Men of Fiji* and *Wokabout Bilong Tonten*, reflected contemporary social problems. *Two Men of Fiji*, made by Shell Australia in 1959, addressed the problem of urban drift, familiar in many countries where the economic and social vitality of traditional village life is under threat from urbanisation. Narrated by a senior Fijian chief, the Tui Nayau, the film is set in the Lau group, and follows the fortunes of Andrew and Charlie who leave their village for Suva. Andrew is going to study to be a medical assistant at college in Suva; Charlie, bored and restless, slips away from the village without taking leave of the chief, and goes to Suva where he finds work as an unskilled labourer. However, finding city life expensive and aimless, he decides to return to his village and his sweetheart. The Tui Nayau admonishes Charlie: if you young men go away, who will keep the village in good order?

Film Australia's *Wokabout Bilong Tonten* (1974) is designed to foster better community relations between Highlanders and Coastals in Papua New Guinea. Set just prior to the country's independence this Tok Pisin language drama (also available in Hiri Motu) is about the search by a young coastal man for his missing brother. His search takes him to the Highlands where he finds his brother, meets and marries a Chimbu girl, and returns to his village.

The trend for presenting social problems in the form of fictional narrative films has continued since independence. *Tukana* (1984), in Tok Pisin with English subtitles, produced by the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and the North Solomons Provincial Government, deals with the effects of Westernisation on village life, with a special emphasis on the generation gap. The central character, played by Albert Toro who also wrote the screenplay, is a university drop-out who finds life in the village stifling, 'the old people control everything here'. He and other members of his generation are rude to the elders, idle, and take refuge in excessive drinking. Tukana's parents are anxious for him to conclude an arranged marriage with Josephine, a school teacher. Tukana says he is not ready and takes off for the Panguna copper mine where he obtains employment as a driver of machinery. He also carries on an affair with Lucy, daughter of the chairman of his village council, who is at secondary school in a town near the mine. Lucy exploits the relationship for money while carrying on a more serious affair with another miner. She becomes pregnant and goes back to the village. The spurned Tukana also returns to the village and marries Josephine, who is killed shortly afterwards in a road accident. Weaned of his youthful indulgence in alcohol by the death of Josephine, Tukana decides to become a teacher. An undercurrent of sorcery adds to the dramatic tension of this film. Excessive consumption of alcohol is not confined to the younger generation. The men of the village are denounced

at a community meeting by a woman member for setting a bad example to the younger generation. She tells them that they are all alcoholics who sit around talking and chewing betel nut during community work, while the women work hard.

Dreamland of the Moonless Nights (1991), another social problem film, billed as Fiji's first international feature film, backed by German finance and produced and directed by German filmmaker Ellen Umlauf, tackles the question of the division between Fijians and Indo-Fijians in a doomed romance between a Fijian boy and an Indian girl. The boy, Lagani, installed during the film as a high chief in Kandavu, commits suicide when Ashwini is forced into an arranged marriage. The tragedy brings together, in a ceremonial meal of reconciliation, the Indian and Fijian families who were so vehemently opposed to the romance. The film suffers from a banal script, the inexperience of the actors, the amateurishness of the direction and, as a number of letters to the *Fiji Times* pointed out, a lack of understanding of the cultures of both Fijians and Indo-Fijians. There were complaints about the radio or movie Hindi spoken by the Indian characters, which is not the slang Hindi of everyday usage, about the absence of any indication in the film of the habitual friendliness between Fijian and Indian families at the neighbourhood level, and about the implausibility of the suicide of the young Fijian chief.[23]

Expatriate Samoan author Albert Wendt has had two of his novels turned into films, *Sons For The Return Home* (1979) and *Flying Fox In A Freedom Tree* (1989), by New Zealand production companies. Both are adaptations from his written works. *Sons For The Return Home* is about a love affair between a Samoan and a New Zealand student and the racial and cultural problems associated with that relationship. One of the narrative strands in *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree* is an identity conflict suffered by Pepe, a Samoan youth, as a result of the clash between his traditional culture and the Western culture his father has adopted which includes Christianity and a passion for money and success. In revolt against his father, Pepe turns to crime and at his trial denounces Christianity. The film has received international acclaim, but did not 'draw the expected big Samoan audiences in New Zealand'.[24] When it was shown at a festival of Pacific films at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 1990, it received a hostile reception from Samoan students in the audience who took exception to the film's anti-Christian sentiments.[25] In the planning stages is an Australian production based on Tongan Epeli Hau'ofa's *Tales of*

[23] See letters to *Fiji Times*: 14 Mar. 1991, 15 Mar. 1991, 16 Mar. 1991, 19 Mar. 1991, 21 Mar. 1991.

[24] D. Robie, 'Troubled times reflected in Samoans' inner search', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1991, p.45.

[25] Communication from conference participant.

the Tikongs which includes some deft satire of the human foibles of all the participants, Islander and European, in the international aid industry that is showering the tiny Pacific Island state of Tiko with development projects.

The Role of Film in the Teaching of History

Various approaches have been adopted to incorporate film and television into the teaching of history at the tertiary level. Films and videos have been used as audio-visual aids; students have themselves been involved in film production; some history courses have included an analysis of film language and methodology.

The most familiar method is the use of film as a visual aid. It is not enough, however, in a course on contemporary Pacific history to merely show films such as *Half Life* or *Senso Daughters* or *Go Tell it to the Judge* without comment. No film should be shown merely to liven up a lecture series. A film needs to be set in its socio-political context. Who made the film, when was it made, who provided the funding and why? Before studying history, first study the historian. Before studying the film, first study the filmmaker or makers. Study the organisation, the mode of production. What is the objective of the film? How are its effects achieved? Film and television audiences must be able to 'read' films. Despite their vividness and sense of immediacy, films are no more 'real' than written history. Films - manipulated images - are made up of multiple shots which are assembled together. The camera continually changes its position, the event cannot be perceived within a continuous sequence; the unified scene of the written text is, on the screen, a sequence of separated shootings. In the compilation documentary which may mix stills, archival footage, re-enactments, close-ups of documents, interviews etc., the manipulation is at its most obvious.

Film language is different from written language. If Noriko Seguchi was setting out to write a narrative history of the Great East Asian or 'Forgotten War' in Papua New Guinea with a special focus on the use of 'comfort women' (military prostitutes) Japanese, Korean or Papua New Guinean, it is unlikely that she would begin, as *Senso Daughters* does, with people paying their respects at the Imperial Plaza in Tokyo in October 1988 as Emperor Hirohito lies gravely ill. It is equally unlikely that, in the concluding moments, prior to closure with the Emperor's death in Tokyo, she would have, as in the opening sequences, Joseph Kanaka singing with great vivacity on a beach in Papua New Guinea a Japanese song that had been taught to him by one of the forces of the Japanese army of occupation - whom he so admired.

One way of promoting film literacy is to deconstruct a compilation documentary. *First Contact*, with its use of Mick Leahy's original footage, old still photographs, newsreels, and interviews with the surviving Leahy brothers and the Highlanders, illustrates the technique with great clarity.

Pierre Sorlin of the University of Paris is a prominent advocate of the view that history teachers should involve their students in film production:

> I cannot imagine a research worker who studies documents without any knowledge of the techniques and rules used to produce these documents, or a professor whose only function is to explain documents made by other people and my conclusion is: we cannot analyse films, as pieces of evidence for social history, without first practising cinema.[26]

In the Pacific Islands the 'hands on' approach has been used at the secondary level at Xavier High School in Chuuk (Truk) in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). In the late 1970s students made video programmes not as part of a history course but to improve their English literacy skills, to acquire a greater understanding of the profound social changes that were taking place in Micronesia in the 1970s, and to gain an understanding of the technology of television. This was done by senior students in the course of a Town Study Project. *Early Foreign Contacts in Micronesia 1521-1885* (1978) traced early foreign contacts in the islands and attempted to interpret the legacy of these contacts, while *Nothing To Do, Nowhere To Go* (1977) looked at problems of youth unrest in Moen, Chuuk. [27] The obvious problem with student film production is the cost involved in providing the equipment. Another method of promoting film literacy is to record a television programme and, after showing it in the lecture theatre, to ask students to edit the shots and the soundtrack either theoretically or even practically - equipment (and copyright law) permitting.[28]

Apart from an understanding of film language, the facts need to be verified. The accuracy of some of the facts presented in the video documentary *Indo-Fijian Women of Suva - The Untold Story* have been queried. The claim that the Indian women came voluntarily to the cane-fields of Fiji runs counter to the findings of a number of scholars who have worked in the area.[29] In the case of Dennis O'Rourke's film, *Half Life* (1986), it has been suggested that the film overstates the case about the US Atomic Energy Commission's foreknowledge of wind change during the Bravo test that led to the radiation exposure of some US weathermen and Marshallese on Rongelap and Utirik Atolls. There

[26] Pierre Sorlin, 'Filmmaking as a teaching aid', *The Second Australian Film and History Conference Papers*, 3.

[27] E.H.F. Metzgar, 'TV in Truk: an experimental curriculum', *Pacific Islands Communication Journal*, 15:1 (1987), 99-110.

[28] A more painstaking exercise in deconstruction was undertaken by Neil McDonald when he examined the way in which the original rolls of film taken by Damien Parer in Kokoda during the Second World War were edited without reference to 'lost' dope sheets. McDonald, 'Journey to Kokoda'.

[29] Vijay Naidu, '"Retold Stories": a review of the video documentary - Indo-Fijian Women in Suva - The Untold Story', by Shaista Shameem, unpublished.

is no suggestion that it might have been a case of lack of understanding of the technology on the part of the US Atomic Energy Commission. The PBC production *Radio Bikini* (1987), it has been suggested, presents a more balanced approach.[30] At least this point should be raised when showing the film to students.

The BBC television production *Go Tell It To The Judge* (1977) provides a fascinating example of the way the past is used to serve present ends. The people whose fate it documents now live - in exile - on Rabi Island in Fiji. The film about their court case, the longest civil case in British legal history, is part of the collective memory of the Banaban people, but the memory recorded in the film is fiercely contested. The core of the disagreement is the prominence given in the film to a particular family. It has been argued that in the fight against the British Phosphate Company and the British Government many more Rabi Islanders were involved than appears to be the case in the film. The film speaks of chiefs but some Rabi Islanders insist that there were no chiefs or kings or queens on Banaba. Passions about the film have been so strong that at one stage a copy of the film was tossed into the sea.[31] It is not without significance that Rabi Island is currently riven by factionalism which climaxed in December 1991 with the ousting of the Island's Council in a 'peaceful coup'.[32] The controversy surrounding the film serves to underline the important role of film as an accessible record of the past which is available to all - educated and uneducated. If history is presented on film, then all - and not least the people whose history is being interpreted - can participate in the argument of history.

THE DAWN of the audio-visual age has enlarged the range of sources available for historians writing about the modern history of the Pacific Islands. Audio-visual evidence is as essential to any study of contemporary history as written documentation. Not only should historians not neglect the study of audio-visual evidence in their particular specialities, but they should also keep a vigilant eye on film and television history productions to ensure that events are being portrayed accurately and, where they are not, offending productions should be challenged. This role of scrutineer is of the utmost importance given the size of audiences for film and television productions, the role of film and television in the transmission of popular culture and the polemical nature of

[30] Pers. comm. Fran X. Hezel SJ, Suva, 13 Nov. 1991.

[31] The film was shown by the Rabi Island Students Association at the University of the South Pacific (USP) during the Rabi Island Cultural Week in 1991 and by a senior student at the USP as part of a seminar presentation on the history of the Banaban people.

[32] *Fiji Times*, 14 Jan. 1992.

many historical documentaries - made for the specific purpose of influencing present opinions and attitudes.

Finally, if historians wish to continue to play their traditional role as interpreters of the past and engage in a dialogue about the past with the general public as opposed to small, highly specialised audiences, then they must give greater consideration to the use of film in the presentation of their findings. This communication by film is of special significance in the presentation of Pacific Island history. Illiteracy rates are high in many of the islands. In any case, not only Pacific Islanders, but the majority of people, do not read scholarly articles in academic journals but they do watch films. Film and television programmes made about Pacific Island peoples should be shown to Pacific Islanders and not just to audiences in Australia or New Zealand or on the BBC or Channel Four in Britain. Papua New Guinean historian John Waiko, who has strong feelings about the socially disruptive impact of Western commercial television programmes on Papau New Guinea cultures, writes:

> It is a national disgrace to allow programmes that corrupt the cultural tradition while many of the excellent locally produced films such as *Shark Callers of Kontu*, *Cowboy and Maria Come to Town*, *First Contact*, *Man Without Pigs*, and *Tin Pis Run* which portray Papua New Guinea identity and the current social problems are not shown.[33]

If historians present their interpretations on film, they are potentially available to all; everyone should have the opportunity to participate in that unending dialogue between the present and the past which is the stuff of history. By presenting their interpretations of the past to mass audiences, using audio-visual technology, historians will ensure that they maintain a role in the mainstream of popular culture and are not discarded as 'representatives of an outmoded erudition'.

[33] J.D. Waiko, 'My land, my sovereignty? A Question of Legitimacy in Papua New Guinea', paper presented to the Third Conference of the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association, Monash University, Melbourne, 16-18 Dec. 1991.

FOURTEEN

The Future of Pacific Islands History: A Personal View

K. R. HOWE

WHEN BRIJ LAL asked me to present some thoughts on future directions of Pacific Islands history he said that I might begin by briefly looking at the past as a way of then contemplating possible futures. He reminded me of an article I wrote, published in *Pacific Studies* in 1979, entitled 'Pacific history in the 1980s: new directions or monograph myopia?'. He suggested that I might briefly give it a retrospective assessment.

My argument in that article was that Pacific historians, busily engaged in their island-centred culture contact studies that involved detailed research at a micro level, were 'heading rapidly towards a state of monograph myopia . . . finding out more and more about less and less . . . [with] relatively little consideration . . . given to any overall purpose or direction'. I suggested six practical directions Pacific historians might consider. I must say that checking those six agenda items a dozen years later is very revealing of the discipline's evolution. The six suggestions were that we needed:

(i) more histories of specific islands and groups.
By the late 1970s there were such histories of Hawaii, New Guinea, Samoa, Fiji and Tonga but little else. Now there are additional histories of most of these places as well as of a host of other islands/groups - notably the Solomons, New Caledonia, Gilbert/Ellice/Kiribati/Tuvalu, Tahiti, Marquesas. And the former 'black hole' of Pacific history - Micronesia - is now receiving a lot of attention. There are still some notable gaps such as Vanuatu and the Cook Islands.
(ii) some short/general histories.
There are now three, those by myself and, recently, by Ian Campbell and Deryck Scarr. And Douglas Oliver's earlier history has been revised.
(iii) to examine topics on a thematic/regional basis, especially economic activity, that transcended the local/institutional.

There has been rather less advance here though a start has been made with, for example, Maslyn Williams's and Barrie Macdonald's study of the phosphate industry, and the recent overview of labour by Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie and Doug Munro.

(iv) to see the Pacific Islands in a wider geographic, economic and political framework of the Ocean that includes the Americas, Russia, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, Australasia.

The major work in this regard is Oskar Spate's three volume history, but that comes only to the early 19th century. Donald Denoon's work on settler capitalism offers further possibilities.

(v) more comparative history of the islands.

There is still little comparative history, especially for the 19th century. I did note in 1979 that 'There has yet to be any comparative work on colonial rule, the experience of the second world war, or the whole process of decolonisation' - that view is now clearly dated.

(vi) more interdisciplinary investigation.

For example, I referred to Greg Dening's 1966 call for ethnohistory. Dening has since led the way with his studies of Bligh and Gooch. However it is the anthropologists like Marshall Sahlins who have made the greatest contribution in this direction.

There were some developments that I did not foresee, particularly gender relations studies.

In one sense it was relatively easy back in 1978/79 to delineate such an obvious agenda for the immediate future, such was the relative smallness and homogeneity of the Pacific history writing profession. Moreover the issues were relatively transcribed within the framework of the island-centred culture contact work that went largely unquestioned and so fruitfully occupied a generation of scholarship, from the 1960s into the 1980s.

While some of the limitations of this scholarship have always been acknowledged by its practitioners, it is perhaps only now, in retrospect, that some of its underlying characteristics can be seen in wider perspective.

Those of us involved in that generation of culture contact studies, when Jim Davidson's Department of Pacific History at the Australian National University was in its heyday in the late 1960s/early 1970s, were enthused by its apparent relevance in a post-colonial era, particularly with its concern to highlight the role of the 'other side of the frontier' in culture contact situations.

Yet ironically many, if not most of these studies were not really informed by the Pacific Islands present. Or rather the nature of that present, as it was perceived, did not offer any obvious contemporary political agenda or conscious ideology, other than the attempt to write Pacific Islanders into Pacific history, that historians could impose upon their studies of the Pacific

past. By contrast, historians of countries in Africa or South/Southeast Asia or Latin America, who were at the same time also decolonising their subjects, were greatly influenced by contemporary events in those countries, particularly bloody struggles of national liberation. The international scholarly discourse on such events, often neo-Marxist and anti-colonial, gave a particular ideological edge and a set of related analytical structures to the historical investigation of such regions.

But the contemporary Pacific Islands seemed to be different, characterised, it appeared, by an essentially untroubled, co-operative transition from colonial rule to constitutional independence. There seemed little happening in the modern Pacific Islands that might disturb historians as they quietly went about their business. Moreover, there was often a conscious rejection of the methodological/theoretical approaches of scholarship elsewhere since there was both a wish to highlight the uniqueness of the Pacific historical experience, as well as a belief that by examining small scale societies it might be possible, in Davidson's words, to reduce to 'a minimum' the 'guesswork in history'. The Pacific historian, he claimed, did not have to 'be content with following only broad trends'; generalisation could both emerge from and be tested by detailed case study. My pre-ANU experience at Auckland University had helped make me receptive to such an approach. In my Masters studies at Auckland University I had been introduced by Judith Binney to new and daring research into New Zealand contact history. Ralph Linton's generalised statements about 'indigenous response' or acculturation, based on American Indian examples, had been applied by Harrison Wright in the 1960s to New Zealand and had generated one of the few serious historical debates there. A bevy of us wrote MA theses claiming Wright's views to be of little relevance to the Maori experience.

The study of Pacific history offered a seductive, 'autochthonous' experience. Amongst many new PhD students in Pacific history, there was often a sense of liberation from the clutter of Eurocentric academic studies that dominated BA and MA degrees in those days. And it should not be forgotten that in the 1960s and 1970s it was far more common for doctoral students from Australia and New Zealand to study northern hemisphere topics in England or the US than it was to study the Pacific region in the region. Some of my peers who went on to doctoral study in the US and England spent years reading the established historical literature on their chosen subjects whereas with a Pacific topic you were lucky to have a week's secondary reading to cope with. And all this combined with the discovery, it seemed, of massive and untouched Pacific archival sources. The indefatigable Bob Langdon with his Pacific Manuscripts Bureau daily hauled boxes of new microfilms along the Coombs Building corridors. Pacific history offered ready access to apparently manageable and untouched historical subjects.

Furthermore, budding Pacific historians were additionally attracted by ingrained images of sunny tropical isles and all the mystic of Arcadia. Within hours of arriving at the ANU I was put in front of a Pacific map and advised by more experienced students that for my proposed 'culture contact study' I should select a 'nice' island for fieldwork, and one whose historical records were still in archives in Europe so as to secure a trip there too. I thank you Bronwen Douglas. The Loyalty Islands proved a perfect choice.

Intellectual excitement about Pacific studies at ANU was always tinged with island Romance. And as much as the PhD scholarship tried to deconstruct Romantic myths about Oceanic history, the 'new' interpretations were still fundamentally tinted by the notion of Paradise, regardless of whether it be found or lost, enhanced or ruined.

One of the more obvious consequences of this approach was the fact that Pacific Islands historical scholarship focused overwhelmingly on pre-colonial events and issues. The year 1900 persistently marked the terminal date for its articles and monographs. But this emphasis on pre-colonial times by Pacific historians had an additional cause. I believe in retrospect that the discipline's post-war rejection of the imperial historical approach was all too zealous. Simply, the study of colonial government *per se*, even if such study was divorced from older imperial values, was unfashionable. Those of us doing our PhD apprenticeships in Davidson's department would sometimes look askance at those few unfortunates amongst us who had somehow chosen to deal with 'tainted' colonial topics. The cutting edge was early culture contact. With few exceptions, then, Pacific historians left the 20th century to geographers, economists, anthropologists and others. It is ironic that Davidson who, unlike most Pacific historians at ANU at the time, was intimately involved in contemporary decolonisation issues at a very practical level, had, as perhaps his deepest intellectual passion, his biography of his archetypal Pacific folk-hero - Peter Dillon, the 19th century trader.

It is too easy in retrospect to scorn the pre-colonial culture contact studies of that time. I think that it is important to acknowledge their contribution as the major foundation of modern Pacific history and not to forget the sense of discovery, excitement and ideological commitment to the region that drove its practitioners.

If there was a symbolic moment when the community of Pacific historians was jolted by the Pacific present it was the Fiji coup of 1987. But it was not an isolated event. When seen in the wider context of certain emerging tensions in the Pacific Islands, the heady optimism that earlier accompanied the peaceful transition of many islands from colonial rule to self-government and independence now seemed somewhat misplaced. Among the more contentious issues are conflicts between Western constitutional traditions and indigenous values; tensions between regions and the superimposed nation states; ever

more apparent contradictions between constitutional independence and economic dependence; growing demands for self-government and/or independence where that still had not been achieved and the often related strategic and nuclear implications. By the later 1980s many Pacific islands were, it seemed, considerably less placid places than they had been in previous decades.

Recent Pacific historical study has reflected these concerns in so far as Pacific historians are more conscious of their Pacific present. The agenda of earlier decades is now more informed by current considerations. One symbolic institutional reflection of this is the launching of a new historical journal in 1989 - *The Contemporary Pacific*. Along with Brij Lal and Bob Kiste, I am editing a multi-authored history of the Pacific Islands in the 20th century. While this volume chronologically follows on from my earlier general history of the Pacific Islands to 1900 its concerns are in some respects rather different. Pacific historians are not only extending their chronological horizons and their range of topics, but, more fundamentally, they are going through a fairly significant historiographic evolution whereby the very assumptions of the old agenda are rapidly changing and even being replaced.

I cannot foresee, as I could a decade ago, a neat new agenda of things to do. The future of the discipline is much more hazy, reflecting the much more complex nature of Pacific historical activity and its increasingly numerous and diverse scholars. The days of the cosy homogeneity, indeed hegemony, of the ANU school of island-centred culture contact studies are long gone. In keeping with the spirit of the age we have been 'decentred'. Consequently I see Pacific history losing many of its past identifying characteristics. Its new characteristics will, I think, be less specific or unique than they have been in the past. As with many academic disciplines, the tendency is towards diversification of activity and multi-specialisation.

More specifically, Pacific history will be much more present-oriented even in studies of pre-colonial situations. There will be a greatly increased emphasis on the 20th century, specifically on colonial and post-colonial events. The recent surge of interest in World War Two, on nuclear/strategic issues, and on problems of micro-states are obvious examples. Pacific history will become more overtly and self consciously political/ideological.

The preponderant focus on geographic Polynesia and Melanesia - what is often referred to as the Australasian Pacific perspective - will be greatly modified by the growth of Micronesian studies with an American scholarly institutional basis. The resources and imperatives have already moved, I believe, from the southern hemisphere to the northern. Belatedly, a variety of non-English sources, particularly French, will receive due recognition. The current and future influence of Asia on Oceania will become a major topic.

In terms of perspective, Pacific history will be seen far less in terms of European/Islander culture contact. I think this will be greatly liberating for it will free the discipline from many of the inevitable moral issues that that perspective implies. The longstanding argument about 'fatal impact' has surely had its day. Why should 'Jake and the fat man' not top Cook Islanders' TV viewing chart? The move from studying culture contact in its cruder sense should allow for a more subtle appreciation of values and interactions within indigenous communities. Chris Owen's film *Man Without Pigs* wonderfully highlights inter-community relationships without subsuming them to the broader issues of Westerner/New Guinean cultural interaction, even though that interaction provides the broad context.

There will be much more multi-disciplinary (and hopefully inter-disciplinary) activity as 'history' becomes increasingly less exclusively the preserve of historians. Pacific history will become much less region specific as historical and social science methodologies from other areas of the world are applied to the islands. But one of the dangers of becoming more 'social sciency' has already been illustrated in this workshop, that is, the tendency to talk somewhat carelessly, or was it carefully, in rather crude oppositional categories - 'Islanders'/'Europeans'; 'Western scientific rationalism'/'intuitive indigenous beliefs'.

More substantively, the gentle breeze of postmodernism will become a wind through Pacific history corridors, as it has done in most other disciplines. But in their enthusiasm to establish an identity in Pacific history I hope that present and nascent postmodernists do not replace what they might consider one form of intellectual authoritarianism with but another. After all, postmodernists should be as questioning of their own deconstructions (or are they constructions?) as those of others.

Furthermore, self-styled Pacific history postmodernists should take some care with their deconstructed/reconstructed image of the so-called modernists, who, in this case are identified as the Islander-centred culture contact scholars. (Those of us who once called ourselves the Canberra or 'modern' Pacific historians, to distinguish ourselves from the former imperial ones, have only ourselves to blame.) But much of this 'modern' scholarship is actually far less intellectually authoritarian, is far more reflexive in its concerns, and far more relative in its perspectives than some postmodernists would now claim. 'Modern' Pacific historians have always had an acute concern about the premises of their discipline not least because of its attempts to deal with the cultural 'other'. Pacific historians have long had an introspective self-consciousness and a concern with the socio-cultural context of 'knowledge', reflected in the considerable literature on Pacific historiography generated by its practitioners. And in my own case, apart from my historiographic articles, I would hope that the postmodernists might also look

at both the first and last sentences of *Where the waves fall.* The essentially 'postmodern' sentiments expressed there derive from ideas about the nature of knowledge and the human context in which it is produced that were developed by the particle physicists in the 1920s. Literary theorists from whom most current postmodernist historians derive their inspiration certainly have no monopoly over such ideas and (Saussure apart) are late-comers compared to these physicists.

I also believe that there are dangers of too ardent an application of postmodernism in that its practitioners divorce themselves from the world that *is* the Pacific. It might be argued that the Pacific Islands may well be better off without academics meddling in social, economic and political affairs, but their postmodernism has the capacity to 'disable us' (to borrow a phrase from my sociology colleague Greg Mclennan) as beings with a concern for humanity. If too strictly applied, it legitimises inaction, complacency, and acceptance of the status quo. And, at another level, it should not be forgotten that one of the primeval functions of history is to tell stories. We do ourselves no good as historians if what we offer to the wider public and especially to undergraduate students is limited to jargon laden discussion about text.

The future will also see change in our perception of the islands themselves. Longstanding island-centred perspectives will become increasingly modified now that the islands are part of both Pacific rim and world systems of investment, trade and defence. In an ironic way, perhaps, this represents something of a return to some of the concerns of the older, imperial Pacific history so thoroughly rejected by the post-war island-centred generation of scholars. Pacific historiography is ultimately determined by changing notions of centres and peripheries. For the imperial historians there was no question as to where the peripheries were. The post-war island-centred historians in effect reversed that perception. Now it seems we are moving back towards the concept of islands as someone else's periphery. Pacific historians will still physically and perceptually locate themselves in the islands but they may not be able to accept islands fundamentally as centres in themselves.

And what of Pacific historians, that clan that periodically gathers to reaffirm what so far has been its shared identity? The real challenge will be how to handle the coming diversity and inevitable division. I trust that we will avoid guerrilla warfare, but on the other hand I hope that we do not become too bogged down in introspective discourse in attempts to maintain clan harmony. Michael King, perhaps New Zealand's leading biographer, was once at a conference on biography. After many papers on the theory of biography, sometimes by people who had never written one, he commented that he felt a bit like the bumble bee who was unaware of the laws of aerodynamics, but who nevertheless could remain aloft.

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Notes on Contributors

ROBERT ALDRICH was born in urban New York and grew up in rural Georgia. He received his BA from Emory University and his MA and PhD from Brandeis University in Boston. After teaching in the United States for a year, he moved to Australia in 1981 and soon made a move from the history of France to the history of the French Pacific. He has remained in Australia (even acquired Australian citizenship) and is presently an Associate Professor in Economic History at the University of Sydney. His interests, however, lie in social and cultural history and the history of colonialism and quite definitely not in economics. Robert is the author of many books including *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940*; a sequel to this work is due out shortly. In his next work, he changes seascapes from the Pacific to the Mediterranean to write on *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy*. Among his activities outside work are food, travel and more work.

IAN CAMPBELL graduated with first class honours in history from the University of New England, and took his PhD at the University of Adelaide during the post-war baby-boom slump in academic recruitment. He eventually found an apparently permanent appointment at the University of Canterbury. He has also taught briefly at the Universities of New England, Adelaide, Hawaii and at the 'Atenisi University in Tonga. In the meantime, his education was broadened by several years in other occupations including salesman, importer and school teacher. His publications include *A History of the Pacific Islands* and *Island Kingdom: Tonga Ancient and Modern*. Ian has catholic leisure interests.

DONALD DENOON was born in Scotland but graduated with BA (honours) from Natal University and a PhD from Cambridge University in 1965. In the late 1960s, he taught at Makerere and Ibadan Universities, and became a historian in the Pacific by courtesy of General Idi Amin, who prompted him to flee to the University of Papua New Guinea where he was Professor of History from 1972 to 1981. That environment kindled his curiosity, and allowed him to acquire information and ideas in the haphazard fashion which his temperament requires. He moved to the Australian National University in 1981, became Professor and Head of the Division of Pacific and Asian History in 1990, and is living happily ever after. His publications include *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere* and *Public Health in Papua New Guinea: Medical Possibility and Social Constraint, 1884-1984*.

BRONWEN DOUGLAS did her first degree in history at Adelaide University and a PhD in Pacific history at the Australian National University. She then went to the history department of La Trobe University and has remained there ever since, teaching a variety of subjects concentrating on aspects of Pacific, Aboriginal and African history and the interface of history and anthropology. Recent infection by postmodern sensibilities has inspired her interest in gender and the politics of tradition. Her many

publications in such journals as *The Journal of Pacific History*, *Social Analysis* and *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* include articles on topics ranging from traditional Pacific leadership, ethnographic history, and culture contacts to indigenous encounters with Christianity and colonialism in New Caledonia and Vanuatu. She spends her leisure hours barracking for the Victorian Under-16 girls basketball team.

NIEL GUNSON was born in south Gippsland, and graduated in history and English from the University of Melbourne, where he also completed his MA in Pacific history. He was one of the first PhD students in the old Department of Pacific History at ANU and is now the longest serving Pacific historian in the Research School of Pacific Studies. He has specialised in missionary history (*Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860*, and the *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L.E. Threlkeld, Missionary to the Aborigines*), and religion and leadership in Polynesia. A long-time editor of *The Journal of Pacific History*, he also founded *Aboriginal History*. In 1972, he dodged bullets during a revolution in Madagascar, and visited Mozambique and Ethiopia before the collapse of their régimes. He now lives in north Canberra where he shares his house with several extensive book collections and a wide range of early English and Chinese export porcelain.

DAVID HANLON first went to the Pacific, to Pohnpei in the Eastern Carolines, in 1970 as a Peace Corps volunteer. Three years later, he returned to the United States and took his MA from the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. After two years working for the Japanese Embassy in Washington, DC, he went back to the Islands to teach at the Community College of Micronesia. His fascination with the culture and history of Pohnpei led him to graduate studies in history at the University of Hawaii. From his PhD thesis, completed in 1984, came the prize-winning book, *Upon a Stone Altar: A History of the Island of Pohnpei to 1890*. He presently serves as the editor of *The Contemporary Pacific*, and is conducting research on a cross-cultural history of economic development in American Micronesia from 1945 to 1979. David's precious leisure hours are taken up coaching or otherwise participating in the Hawaii Kai junior league soccer and baseball competitions.

PETER HEMPENSTALL came to Pacific history via the universities of Queensland, Hamburg, and Oxford from which he graduated with a DPhil in 1973. This tortuous journey is symptomatic of a native uncertainty where to plant his feet. In similar fashion he has taught at the University of Newcastle since 1975 in Pacific history, international relations, Australian social history and the history and method of biographical writing. Even in the Pacific his research has taken him to Papua New Guinea, Micronesia and Western Samoa. At present he is engaged on a project with Western Samoans to explore the life histories of individuals who had most to do with Wilhelm Solf, the governor of German Samoa. Among his many publications are *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule: A study in the meaning of colonial resistance* and the Australian biography, *The Meddlesome Priest: A Life of Ernest Burgmann*.

KERRY HOWE graduated with an MA from Auckland University and PhD from the Australian National University in 1974. He has been happily teaching Pacific history

at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand, for nearly two decades, interspersed with welcome and stimulating periods of research and teaching in the United States, Canada and Australia. His many publications include *Where the Waves Fall: A new South Sea Islands history from first settlement to colonial rule*, and *Singer in a Songless Land: A Life of Edward Tregear*. He is currently co-editing a history of the Pacific Islands in the 20th century. Apart from dreaming and writing about the Pacific, Kerry is a keen cyclist and sea kayaker, though the opportunities for the latter are frustratingly limited in land-locked Palmerston North.

BRIJ LAL was born in Labasa, Fiji and attended the University of the South Pacific on a government scholarship to become a high school English teacher, which he never did. Put off by a required course in transformational grammar and thus unable to pursue his romantic interest in the novels of the Brontē sisters, he switched to history as the next best option, a decision he has not often regretted. His MA is in modern Asian history from the University of British Columbia and a PhD from the Australian National University (1980). He has taught history at his alma mater, the University of Papua New Guinea and for nearly a decade at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He now lives in Canberra and works at ANU. Among his publications are *Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians*, and the forthcoming *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the 20th Century*. An armchair soccer player, Brij spends the summer months camping and exploring the Australian bush.

SIONE LĀTŪKEFU is now a visitor with the Division of Pacific and Asian History at the Australian National University. Born and educated in Tonga where he was ordained as a minister of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, he graduated with his BA and DipEd from the University of Queensland and a PhD from the Australian National University in the late 1960s, probably the first indigenous Pacific Islands person to do doctoral work in history. In 1967, he left Canberra with his wife, Ruth, to teach Pacific history at the University of Papua New Guinea, where he remained for the next 19 happy years. He left Port Moresby to become the Principal of the Pacific Theological College, from which he retired at the end of 1991. Among his numerous publications are *Church and State in Tonga: The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and Political Development, 1822-1875*, and an edited collection, *Papua New Guinea: A Century of Colonial Impact, 1884-1984*. He lives with his family in Canberra, and counts music, gardening and watching rugby union among his hobbies.

JACQUELINE LECKIE graduated with a BA (honours) and PhD in history from Otago University. Unhappy with the cold South Island climate, she made sure that her doctoral research on the history of the New Zealand Gujarati community involved plenty of fieldwork outside New Zealand. Upon completing her thesis, she immediately left New Zealand to teach history for several years at the University of the South Pacific. This was followed by a stint of lecturing at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, after which she returned to teach social anthropology at her alma mater where she is presently based. Her research projects reflect her travels and a strong interest in contemporary

aspects of labour in the Pacific, ethnicity and gender issues. This has resulted in several articles and edited collections, including co-editing *Labour in the South Pacific*.

CLIVE MOORE was born at Mackay in north Queensland, and completed his undergraduate studies at James Cook University in Townsville in 1973. After a brief stint at La Trobe University, he returned to his alma mater to complete a PhD in 1981. Soon afterwards, he moved further north, to the University of Papua New Guinea, where he taught history and for a while acted as the Director of Extension Services. In his spare time in Port Moresby, he also managed to perfect the art of wind surfing at the Oala Rarua beach. In 1987 he joined the University of Queensland, which has allowed him to redesign his job to suit his temperament and training: teaching Australian and Pacific history. Clive's research and writing have mirrored his location, particularly the *Kanaka: A history of Melanesian Mackay*, and the co-edited volume, *Labour in the South Pacific*. He is still trying to make sense of Papua New Guinea in the 1980s by researching British New Guinea in the 1880s.

HANK NELSON was born in Boort, Victoria, and graduated from Melbourne University. After teaching in high schools, he lectured at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. In 1966, he went to Port Moresby to teach at the Administrative College and the University of Papua New Guinea where he obtained a PhD for a thesis on the history of gold mining in that country. In 1972, he joined the Australian National University where he is now a Senior Fellow in Pacific History. He has written widely on the history of Papua New Guinea and Australia and has been involved in making film and radio documentaries. His publications include *Taim Bilong Masta: The Australian Involvement with Papua New Guinea* and *Black, White and Gold: Goldmining in Papua New Guinea*. Although he has lived in Canberra for nearly 20 years, like many other expatriate Victorians, Hank quietly continues to follow the fortunes of the Australian Football League.

CAROLINE RALSTON first studied Pacific history in her honours year at the University of Adelaide and went on to do a PhD in the same field at the Australian National University in the mid-1960s. As a dutiful wife she then followed her husband to Denmark for two years and the United States for another year, before returning to Australia to take up an appointment at Macquarie University in Sydney, where she has been happily based ever since, more recently as an Associate Professor. Travel abroad alerted her to the sexist nature not only of life in general but academic activities in particular. Consequently, she has spent the last decade or so investigating the nature of gender relations and the roles of women in Polynesian societies from pre-contact times until the 1990s. Among her publications are numerous articles and the book *Grass Huts and Warehouses: Pacific Beach Communities of the Nineteenth Century*.

DERYCK SCARR is a graduate of Exeter University with a PhD from the Australian National University in whose Research School of Pacific Studies he remembers very warmly the Davidson years and remains as a Senior Fellow in Pacific history. He has been and currently is an editor of *The Journal of Pacific History*. His seven books include biographies of Fijian governor Sir John Bates Thurston and Ratu Sir Lala

Sukuna as well as *Fiji: The Politics of Illusion. The Military coups in Fiji* and *Kingdoms of the Reefs: The History of the Pacific Islands.* Currently, he is working on a comparative history of archipelagic peoples in the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic oceans and the Pacific volume in the 'Seas in History' series. His preferred alternative to powder and ball is a 30-foot yacht on the Pacific coast of Australia.

ROSALEEN SMYTH took her first degree at Sydney University where she was more active in the productions of Sydney University Dramatic Society than academic pursuits. After two memorable years as a volunteer teacher in Western Samoa, she spent five years as an actor in the United Kingdom, which was followed by over 10 years of lecturing in Africa in the Sudan and Zambia and a PhD in African history from the University of London. More recently she has been an adviser on Aboriginal Affairs and on Media and Communications with the Parliamentary Research Service in Canberra and worked with the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody. This article was written when she was on the staff of the University of the South Pacific in Suva. She has published articles in *The Journal of African History* and *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, and is the author of a forthcoming book, *British Propaganda Films in Africa.*

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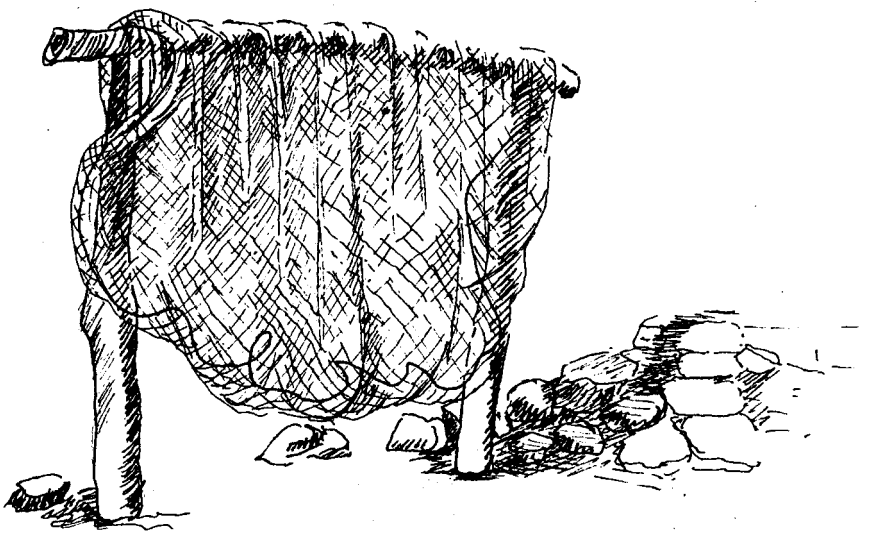

Pacific History has been lived, and remembered, and reflected upon for as long as there were Pacific Islanders. Western traditions of scholarship were brought to bear as soon as Westerners ventured across the ocean; but not until the 1950s did these traditions crystallise into a formal discipline. Jim Davidson was its charismatic organiser at the Australian National University, and his guidelines influenced a generation of scholars. Forty years later, many traditions and methods mingle in the practice of Pacific Historians from Australia and New Zealand across the Islands to Hawai'i and California. It is no longer possible (nor desirable) to say what our agenda should be. The Workshop in Canberra in 1991 enabled scholars to describe their background, their methods and their enthusiasms: the outcome is an account of the hopes and expectations of the discipline as a whole.

Donald Denoon
Professor of Pacific History
Australian National University