Edited by
Ton Otto and Nicholas Thomas

Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific

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Amsteldijk 166
1st Floor
1079 LH Amsterdam
The Netherlands

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Otto, Ton
Narratives of nation in the South Pacific. — (Studies in anthropology and history ; v. 19)
1. Oceania—Social life and customs
I. Title II. Thomas, Nicholas, 1928–
305.8'994

ISBN 0-203-98549-4 Master e-book ISBN
ISBN 90-5702-086-6 (Softcover)

Front Cover
Mathias Kauage, [Okuk's son at Port Moresby airport], acrylic on canvas, 183×162 cm, Australian Museum, Sydney.

In memory of Jeffrey Clark

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Note on the cover image

This painting is one of a series by Mathias Kauage relating to the life and death of Iambakey Okuk, former Minister of Papua New Guinea. Narratives about him are discussed by Jeffrey Clark in his contribution to this book.

The following statement about the painting was provided to the Australian Museum by the artist:

"This plane belongs to America, the flag belongs to America, it's down below next to the flag of Papua New Guinea, the name Kauage is there. On top is 'umben', in pidgin talk we call it 'umben', wind sock, it's at the airport, it stays in Moresby at 7 mile.

Now, Okuk's pikaninni has come from America, he goes to school in America. A minister man from Moresby rang him to come down. I think Pius Wingti or someone rang him to come down.

A girl came to 7 mile with his bicycle, he took the bicycle thinking, 'is Papa dead or is it a lie?' He didn't ride the bicycle to Parliament, not yet. He sat down thinking, 'Is it true my Papa is dead or is he sick?' Then he rode the bicycle to Parliament, he didn't take a car or something, no, he went by bike. 'Papa is inside Parliament at a meeting.' he thought. But when he saw his Papa in the box, he understood.

Later he went back to school in America. When school is finished and he comes back, will he be like his Papa? We don't know. His Papa won the whole country, Papua New Guinea. Has this pikaninni got enough to follow on behind? We don't know."

Preface

This his book emerges from a project on 'The Politics of Tradition in the Pacific' that was generously supported over 1990–93 by Macquarie University and over 1992–94 by the Australian Research Council. The funds provided were primarily used to support four research fellows, and their fieldwork projects: Jocelyn Linnekin and Christina Toren were affiliated at Macquarie, and Ton Otto and Jeffrey Clark were based at the Australian National University. Ton Otto was also financially supported by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO) during his participation in the project.

'reinventions' of custom and tradition in the Pacific; the topic that had been broached, most notably, by a collection of essays edited by Roger Keesing and Robert Tonkinson (1982), that had appeared a year before the celebrated volume on *The Invention of Tradition,* edited by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). We did not aim simply to produce a further set of case studies, but were concerned to ground codifications of tradition in colonial histories, and link particular articulations of 'custom' and identity with the regionally-differentiated experiences of Pacific societies. We sought to map out differing ways in which tradition used gendered values and 'traditional' hierarchies, and how it was incorporated into ethnic politics, especially in Fiji. These concerns were addressed in a previous collection (Jolly and Thomas, 1992), and carry over into the present book, in Lawson's and Jolly's chapters especially.

Over the project's later phases, a number of those involved were prompted to focus upon the question of the significance of *kastom* and related codifications of tradition for the formation of national identities in the Pacific. While earlier writers had certainly been concerned with differences between the representations of tradition that figured in local-level debates and those promulgated by national elites, the relatively stable image of the independent Pacific had changed in the late 1980s, with the Fijian coups, and was more deeply qualified in the early 1990s, as it became obvious that there would be no quick resolution of the Bougainville conflict. Although the essays in this volume range across the Pacific, they are all inflected by these events.

This collection is therefore marked by having been put together in Australia, by scholars mindful of regional developments, but the stimuli were of course theoretical as well as political. Though the approaches adopted here differ from those of the primarily literary case studies in Homi Bhabha's important collection, *Nation and Narration* (1991), that book nevertheless helped consolidate the interest in historical imaginings and founding myths that is central to most of the essays in this volume. We aimed to get away from any static notion of a constructed identity and address the fraught connections between emerging national cultures, gendered constructions of tradition and nationhood, commoditizations of culture, and the relations between new national narratives and other, often more powerful, indigenous cultural forms, such as stories of conversion to Christianity. These questions are set out in greater detail in the introduction to this book.

The editors must thank Sarah Dunlop, who acted as a research assistant on the Politics of Tradition project, and provided editorial assistance on this volume. We also thank Cécile Thijssen who assisted during the last stage of editing this book. It is appropriate that we acknowledge the research group at Macquarie University that initiated the project, which consisted of Stewart Firth, Margaret Jolly, Robert Norton, and Caroline Ralston; we had many productive exchanges with colleagues in north America with closely connected interests, especially Geoffrey White, Lamont Lindstrom, Robert Foster, and the late Roger Keesing, and

with colleagues in Europe, particularly Toon van Meijl and Anton Ploeg. We would also like to thank all those who participated in the project conferences, and particularly the workshop on 'Nation, Identity and Gender in the Pacific', that took place in Canberra in July, 1992, and from which this collection loosely derives.

Only a few months after Jeff Clark took up his fellowship with the project at the beginning of 1994, he learned that he had cancer. He dealt with the disease with a remarkable mixture of courage and black humour; although much of the last year of his life was spent in and out of hospital, he was able to complete several articles and a forthcoming book, entitled *Steel to Stone: a Chronicle of Colonial ism in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea*. This book is dedicated to the memory of a colleague and friend.

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INTRODUCTION
Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific

Ton Otto and Nicholas Thomas

Nationalism in the Pacific is a challenging topic, not least because some would argue that there is nothing to discuss. Jeffrey Clark argues in his contribution to this book that national consciousness is virtually non-existent in the part of the Highlands from which his material is drawn, if not in other areas. Papua New Guinea is hardly an unimportant case, but it is also an extreme one; neither Vanuatu nor the Solomon Islands have consistently experienced the crises of state power and threats of separatism that have faced PNG for some years. Other Pacific islands nations, such as Samoa and Tonga, are relatively coherent politically, and Tonga could even be said to meet traditional, Eurocentric criteria for nationhood, in the sense that political, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries coincide (if the fact that many Tongans have migrated to New Zealand, Australia and the United States is overlooked). This coherence, however, might largely be attributed to prior ethnic distinctiveness and an insular situation, rather than the effective transposition of the modernist model of nation-building to a western Polynesian environment.

It is precisely the tenuous and inchoate character of national cultures in the Pacific that arguably makes the region of interest for the comparative study of nationalism. Or rather, the point may be that nationality or national consciousness is becoming more significant, in the Pacific and elsewhere, than what has been more readily recognized as nationalism. The distinction is that between affirmative patriotism on one side and a collective imagining on the other; the latter may be too dilute politically to constitute an -ism, yet deeply consequential for the ways in which people

understand their biographical locations and attach value and meaning to a variety of practices. People may perceive themselves as members of a nation, and as essentially similar to other nationals, without necessarily possessing a loyal or civic consciousness, and without being willing to die for their country, to take the resonantly significant criterion of nationalism that Anderson and others have discussed extensively. They may, moreover, produce that sense of collective affinity implicitly through the use of a lingua franca or through consumption practices-by drinking beer that possesses a national signature, for instance—rather than through a more deliberate effort of self-definition.

We are not, however, concerned merely with practices and artifacts that may operate as emblematic national badges. The question of what meanings the nation possesses—and which it excludes—is more important than the mere evocation of its presence. Accordingly, most of the chapters in this book focus upon national narratives, or narratives in which the nation may be present as a subtext or supplement. We do not argue that national consciousness is central to biographical and historical imaginings in the Pacific; the point that is of interest, rather, is that it may be subordinate to accounts of religious conversion, it may be added to indigenous traditions of political authority and accomplishment, and its character, as a progressive break from the traditional polity or a natural growth upon it, may be successively reformulated, as Jeffrey Sissons shows in his discussion of national culture in the Cook Islands.

The degree to which the nation is a secondary, dependent, or highly mutable term should be of interest beyond the Pacific, because forms of nationhood are changing everywhere. Though claims that the end of nationalism is nigh are hyperbolic or apocalyptic, or true only in limited senses, it has been widely noted that supranational bodies are acquiring an increasing range of powers formerly closely identified with nationstates. National sovereignty in the domain of financial regulation has been progressively eroded over a long period, to the point that internal expenditure in debtor countries is often now tightly constrained by

bodies such as the IMF. More importantly, the United Nations and especially the European Union are increasingly consequential in a whole range of environmental, human rights, social policy, and even military policy areas. If European nation-states are undergoing, simultaneously with this abrogation of powers to the larger 'union', some devolution of responsibilities to constituent 'nations', provinces, and ethnicities (such as Scotland), European nationhood may end up having something in common with Pacific cases.

Every precarious nation may, of course, be precarious in its own way; and it might seem that parallels between whatever was 'the West' and the postcolonial Pacific could only be superficial. However, at a very general level, the processes just alluded to have proceeded globally, and are of more distinctive salience just now than they could possibly have been, even as recently as the 1970s. While international commerce and capitalism have very long histories, developments in finance since the second world war, that have intensified since the 1970s, have had profound cultural ramifications that surround us, yet for that very reason, remain difficult to see and comprehend. The abolition of fixed exchange rates, together with the steadily increasing significance of a range of international financial institutions and foreign as opposed to domestic investment, have favoured a global shift towards monetarist economic ideology and approaches to government that can loosely be subsumed to the notion of economic rationalism. In the Pacific-in New Zealand and Australia—the ascendancy of this culture of economic policy was presided over by Labour governments, as in Europe and elsewhere former parties of the Left effected similar policy shifts. Even those political regimes still notionally adhering to some form of socialist ideology (in China for example), have adopted the values of the market; these values are, in other words, globally pervasive to an unprecedented degree.

Under these circumstances, it would be surprising if consumption did not assume new significance in the framing of identities, and indeed if national identities did not in fact become present within (if not necessarily subordinate to) consumption practices. Hirsch (1990) and Foster (1991, 1992, 1995) have

opened up these questions in provocative ways for Papua New Guinea; in this volume Sissons puts forward a complementary argument, to the effect that the growth of tourism in the Cook Islands has led to the commoditization of culture and national identity. In this case, new constructions of nationhood are engendered as a result of the consumption practices of foreigners rather than citizens, which may be conducive to a more explicit sense of collectivity than that emergent from the common use of betelnut, certain brands of beer, or currencies with national signatures.

The analysis of nationhood is important for another set of reasons: because it highlights tensions in postcolonial scholarship in the Pacific. 'Postcolonial' here refers not to a critical transcendence of colonial ideologies, but rather the confusion of narratives, authorities, and loyalties that mark the colonial aftermath. Even the word 'aftermath' is inappropriate in the sense that colonial control and settler colonialism continue to prevail in West Papua, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Aotearoa New Zealand, American Samoa, Rapanui or Easter Island, the Hawaiian Islands, and Guam. But in the southwest Pacific questions around nationalism and postcolonialism might be directly linked, in the sense that independent nation making and the end of colonial rule have been two sides of the same coin. In a sense, this is no more than a tautology, but liberal historiography, anthropology, and ethnohistory, can be seen to have been faced with clear options in the lead-up to independence, that are no longer available. One of us has suggested elsewhere (Thomas 1990) that, from the 1950s onward, it was widely recognized among anglophone colonial administrators and scholars in the Pacific that decolonization was both inevitable and desirable: a historiographic style that dramatized the opposition between colonizers and colonized, that emphasized the agency and competence of the latter, that prefigured responsible self-rule, was in many ways credible and appropriate to the times.

Once independence had been gained, however, the fundamental opposition between indigenous people and colonial powers was displaced by a far messier array of local divisions, relating

variously to precolonial antagonisms between different indigenous populations, the simultaneous exacerbation of conflict and suppression of warfare during the colonial period, uneven development, and corruption. The most obvious expression of this is the Bougainville war, but many more localized or primarily non-violent conflicts could be noted, in most other Pacific states. Our point is, that while a historian or anthropologist could unambiguously endorse the movement towards independence, and take continuing colonial hegemony to be immoral, there is no obvious stance and no wide agreement (either among scholars or within the countries concerned) about Bougainville separatism, the factional struggles within the Vanuaaku Pati, or the postcoup regimes in Fiji. If many anthropologists would empathize with the aims of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga, they might do so uneasily, only too aware of the degree to which democracy has promised so much more than it has delivered in other parts of the world.

The point is not simply that it may be difficult to make up one's mind about some of these issues: it is rather that these conditions, together with an analytical interest in nations and states rather than localized social and cultural phenomena, present anthropological rhetoric with definite problems. Despite the contentious character of relativism as an epistemological doctrine, forms of qualified relativism have been fundamental to anthropology at several methodological, ethical, and theoretical levels. In the first place, critique in anthropology has generally followed the Montaigne model of using other societies to expose the arbitrariness of our own order. It has not been usual for ethnographers to take a critical attitude towards the people with whom they have worked: to the contrary, there is almost always a tacit endorsement at an aesthetic level, in the sense that indigenous sociality or culture is shown to be manifold and intricate. And this is usually complemented by political endorsement in the sense that the group one studies is supported, if not through actual advocacy or in the context of consultancy, at least through ways of writing that foreground their perspectives and their side of the story. Can this hold, however, when one is working not with a 'tidy tribe' but

a national, or increasingly a supranational (cf. Hau'ofa 1987) elite?

A relativist stance rather than an evolutionary one has also been presumed, in the sense that societies have been taken to be of equivalent significance and complexity: the issues of scale that were of interest to political anthropologists in the 1960s lapsed, and 'great divide' theories, in particular, have fallen out of favour, despite retaining eloquent proponents such as Ernest Gellner (1983). Nationalism is significant because it prejudices both these relativisms. The overt or tacit endorsement of the people one studies and the richness of lives may still be sustained, and even quite appropriately sustained, in some contexts, but can only be confused in the face of questions concerning *which* people are privileged, in highly differentiated postcolonial societies. On the other side, any analysis of the transformative effects of nation-making and modernity must introduce distinctions between precolonial subjectivities and those that have been projected or introduced through colonialist projects of modernity. It is surely important to specify the novel notions of body, agency, and property that attend these projects, without reintroducing the teleologies of the great divide narratives.

Although the chapters of this book offer divergent perspectives rather than a common approach, a little more needs to be said here about how we imagine their relation. One of the themes that runs as a common thread through all contributions is the complex relationship between imaginings of the nation and of tradition. In contradistinction to the literature of modernization, we do not see tradition as a dead weight that the nation must supersede. Localized identities and attachments may indeed block national consciousness, but they do not do so because they are 'primordial', and hence so deeply seated that a recent import from the west is unlikely to take root. In many cases the ethnic divisions that render nationalism insecure derive from colonial histories, and the reification of traditional culture is, in at least some of its forms, as much a product of modernity as the nation-state itself. Indeed, as the example of Narokobi's formulation of the Melanesian Way makes poignantly clear, it is precisely the moment of independence

and the process of nationmaking that require a formulation of common culture, heritage and identity.

In Chapter One Stephanie Lawson presents a critical and comparative analysis of the various connotations of the concept of tradition. While she argues that objectified tradition has become a key symbol in postcolonial imaginings of nationhood in the Pacific she draws astute parallels with nationalist developments elsewhere in the world. By mapping the various co-ordinates that have guided the debate on traditionalism Lawson demonstrates how a simplistic and flawed opposition between tradition and modernity or 'the West' can obscure an adequate analysis of the processes involved since tradition is clearly present in all societies. Ironically identical conceptual flaws have affected the use of tradition as a political symbol by anti-colonial movements and newly independent states who have seized on the symbolic force of tradition to assert their own, (quasi-) non-colonial identity. An important political effect of this antithetical positioning of new (if 'traditional') identities was the psychological liberation from colonial bonds by countering negative self-images inherited from the colonial past. On the other hand the same symbols of traditional culture with their anti-Western connotations have also been used by indigenous elites to assert and even extent the privileges of minorities while rejecting Western concepts of democracy and justice. Clearly, tradition can function as a political instrument for both liberation and repression. This leads Lawson to develop a critique of the *ideology of traditionalism,* the normative perspective which assigns automatic legitimacy or authority to practices that are claimed to be of the past.

Lawson's contribution with examples drawn from a variety of regions-within the Pacific particularly from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga-pro vides a theoretical background for the more focused chapters which follow. The latter develop various aspects of the tension between tradition and nationhood. Different perspectives between the chapters result from the particular focuses selected by the authors—be it newspaper articles, Christian celebrations or historical narratives—and also from the characteristics of the regions studied. The case studies illustrate that the symbolic

prominence as well as the political force of nationalist imaginings vary considerably between different Pacific nations with the largest contrast occurring between Papua New Guinea on the one hand and small Polynesian states on the other. Various dimensions of these differences are laid out by the contributors to this volume.

Ton Otto focuses on urban Papua New Guinea; in particular he analyses newspaper articles and other writings by Bernard Narokobi, creator and staunch propagator of the concept of a Melanesian Way. With his roots still in the village Narokobi is a typical representative of the modern Melanesian intellectual elite; after a solid Western training in law he occupied various high positions in the Papua New Guinean judiciary and government. His writings clearly illustrate Lawson's general points. Narokobi wants to liberate his fellow Melanesians from a colonial frame of mind which hinders them to realize the potential of political independence; at the same time he opposes what has been called Women's Lib on the basis that it is not Melanesian. Contra Lawson's generalizations Otto argues that 'tradition' is not the key symbol in Narokobi's prose but rather the notion of 'way' which is better glossed as 'culture' if this is understood as flexible and open to change. Otto analyses in detail the dialectical way in which Narokobi tries to encompass diverse and often contradictory notions within his central concept of a uniquely Melanesian Way of life. As a broadly oppositional concept—contrasting with the Western Way—the Melanesian Way cohabits uneasily with the notion of the nation. Narokobi acknowledges that, to a large extent, a sense of national pride and purpose still has to be developed, whereas the Melanesian Way-so to speak-has always been there. Rather than carving out a national consciousness the concept points to a supranational Melanesian solidarity which is founded on a common culture.

In Jeffrey Clark's contribution the focus of attention shifts to rural Papua New Guinea, in particular the Huli people living in the Southern Highlands Province. He finds that notions of nationality are virtually nonexistent. Rather he characterizes the predominant world view as a Melanesian Gothic-indicating the centrality of the Bible, its laws and morality, and the prevalence of millennial

prophecies—thereby alluding to Anderson's thesis that this kind of religious consciousness has to be superseded in order for the nation to be imagined. He argues, however, that an imaginative space for potential national identities has been created by the experience of the colonial and postcolonial state. To substantiate this claim, Clark investigates various images of the state which are rooted in Huli culture and colonial experience. First, the state is often conceptualized following the traditional political model of a big man; this entails a collective self-conception as followers rather than citizens. Reflecting the relatively short and benign colonial period the state-cum-big man is also seen as a white man, which connotes the ambivalent extremes of beneficial parenthood and non-reciprocal relationships. Further the state is often identified with the *nambis*-the coastal region lying from a Huli perspective to the east from where Christianity, power, wealth, and sorcery appear to originate. Since this source of power is outs ide traditional male control it leads to the perception of inequality and deviance. Thus it becomes understandable that Iambakey Okuk—the unexpectedly deceased Highland parliamentarian and minister —could assume almost mythical proportions as a regional big man representing the Highlands not in but *against* the 'nambis' government. Clark therefore identifies the unbridled emergence of regional ethnic identities as the major threat to developing nationhood.

Michael Young explores another organizational and ideological space which is of prime importance for emerging notions of nationhood in the Pacific, namely Christianity. In many national celebrations and texts-including national constitutions—explicit reference to the uniting force of Christendom is made. Conversely, in certain Christian celebrations national subtexts can be found. To demonstrate the latter point Young analyses and compares two centenary celebrations of the arrival of the mission. Both occasions happened in rural and coastal Melanesia—as the PNG Highlands were missionized only much later—namely Dobu Island in Milne Bay Province (PNG) and Epi Island in Vanuatu. An important part of such celebrations is the re-enactment of a mythical story in which the 'first' missionary plays a central role as culture hero,

effecting the transition from war to peace, from darkness to light and from bad to good. These mythical stories combine traditional and Christian schemes and provide models for individual and collective identities. Narratives of nationhood and even nationalism are deftly interwoven with the Christian celebrations in multiple ways, not only through the content of the stories by the connotative conflation of Christianity's 'light' with development and nationalism, but also in more circumstantial ways: by the presence of national politicians, via the sponsorship of state institutions, through the use of a national language, and finally in the employment of such national symbols as anthems and flags (the latter appearing even on the back of commemorative T-shirts). It is a generally accepted observation that the Christian missions penetrated the villages of the Pacific earlier, more deeply, and more effectively than did the colonial states, thereby not only generating key narratives about cultural heroes but also providing essential services in the areas of health, education and development. It is not surprising, therefore, that modern Pacific states have capitalized upon the pervasiveness of Christianity in creating organizational presence and national images. The firmly entrenched Christian narratives point however both to more local and to more encompassing identities than those of the nation-state.

The next chapter by Margaret Jolly also deals with Vanuatu, though at a more urban or 'national' level. It highlights an essential dimension of national narratives, namely the problematic position of women both as signs and as actors. The author takes as a point of departure the inherently contradictory character of nation-state formation between two poles; on the one hand the modernist and homogenizing project of the formation of new identities (as national citizens), on the other hand the evocation of 'authentic' communal values rooted in old and particularist traditions. This contradictory character is amplified in postcolonial states in which political elites are pursuing Western goals of emancipation and nation building while at the same time intentionally maintaining an anti-Western stance by founding their project on local traditions. Jolly demonstrates that this ambivalent

discourse poses special problems and challenges to women. The language of national specificity based on *kastom* (tradition) has thus far clearly adopted a masculinist character in spite of references to the traditional worth of women. Jolly shows how male domination has been expressed and reinforced by traditionalist creations such as the state logo, the National Council of Chiefs, and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. If women appeal to the modernist language of human rights and citizenship they have recourse to international organizations and texts such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This exposes them to charges of importing Western ideas to the detriment of local identities and time-honoured customs. Jolly suggests that if women want to avoid a rehearsal of the colonial (and flawed) equations of tradition with male domination and modernity with female liberation, their best strategy is to indigenize the language of human rights while at the same time asserting their 'traditional' power as women of the place.

The last two case studies in this volume concern relatively small Polynesian Island states which have attained a higher degree of national awareness and cohesion than their western Pacific neighbours.[1] Jeffrey Sissons analyses the process of nationalization, the creation of nationhood, that has taken place in the Cook Islands since self-government in 1965. This was initiated and to a large extent orchestrated by the Cook Islands Party which was in power from 1965 to 1978 and again from 1989 onwards. Interestingly, the formation of a sense of nationality shows distinct phases with shifting goals and priorities. During the first ten years the government used various means to create a feeling of national unity and belonging: large scale annual celebrations of self-government (Constitution Celebrations), mass participation via village committees, women's clubs and youth clubs, a rhetoric of nationalism and the deft utitilization of mass media to amplify the charisma of the Premier as 'father of the nation'. The central values propagated in this period were 'togetherness' and 'progress', not 'culture' which was seen as too particularistic and divisive. From 1974, however, national unity was depicted more in

ethnic (Maori) and cultural terms and new government institutions were founded to preserve and 'develop' the cultural heritage. This swing of policy goals was prompted by the growing importance of the tourist industry which made the possession of a distinct 'national' culture an important asset. This centrally led ethnicizing process was interrupted by the election of a different government which, adopting the 'New Right' policies of international aid and lending institutions, tried to promote a productive economy of agriculture and private enterprise. National and cultural identity were referred to the back seat. Tourism, however, continued to grow in such a way that it became the pivot of the Cook Islands economy. With the return of the Cook Islands Party in 1989 the process of ethnicization was resumed in full force. The construction of national, cultural and ethnic identities were all blurred into one goal with a clear awareness that this comprehensive identity was a proper investment into the production of a marketable commodity: a tourist desti-nation with a difference. Although the government is still the main agent promoting this goal, a certain decentering has occurred with commercial organizations and traditional village leaders underwriting this common project while simultaneously pursuing their own interests.

Jocelyn Linnekin analyses various genres of historical discourse in Western Samoa. She particularly addresses the theme of centredness, the way in which historical narratives point to a national-level cultural and political unit as their main referent. At the outset she stresses that modern Samoan-authored history, whether oral or written, cannot possibly be treated in isolation from Western historiography to which it reacts in various ways. Most obviously this is the case with Western-trained Samoans writing Western style histories. In asserting their distinct Samoan identity they critically evaluate the Western impact on the islands but they thereby have to profile themselves against non-Samoan 'island-centred' revisionist historians who have already written very critically of Western involvement in the Pacific. All written genres of history, however, concur in a common project of centering in which the modern (Western) Samoan nation is the

central referent. Linnekin's contribution primarily examines oral genres of historical discourse which also show the influence of a dialogue with Western notions of history. This is especially evident in the *tala fa'asolopito* (tales of events told in succession) which are an adaptation to Western expectations. Whereas these stories are relatively devoid of meaning and value for Samoans, the more traditional *taeao* (mornings) resonate with historical import. The latter are references to particular gatherings used by so called 'talking chiefs' in their oratory. Their meaning may vary according to context but Linnekin discovers that 'the country' has become the main referent of this genre of historical speech (interestingly a strong Christian subtext can also be found as many good 'mornings' refer to the coming of Christianity which is contrasted with the darkness and warfare of pre-Christian 'mornings'). Although oral historical genres thus participate in the predominant centering project of the nation, they may also be used to criticize the central government and to strengthen local identities. Linnekin argues that the tension between centralized and dispersed authority predates colonialism, just like the concept of *fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan Way) was developed in opposition to Tongan influence before the arrival of the Europeans. She further observes that Samoan (and Pacific) intellectuals are hesitant to develop the anticolonial potential of particularist discourses as this may also threaten the concept of the nation, which is the converging referent of different genres of historical narratives today. Although the nation may be seen as a colonial artefact, it is difficult to imagine a viable political alternative for Pacific Island societies.

With Linnekin we believe that the aspect of centering and decentering is crucial to an understanding of nationalism in the Pacific. Without having to adopt a simplistic notion of agency it is possible to see centres of power emerge in Pacific societies often in the form of constellations of organizations with a convergence of interests. At another level various types of existing or developing discourses engender common referents and thus support centering projects of an ideological nature. Clearly the organizational focus for constructions of nationhood is the nation-state, whether one looks at it from the perspective of an existing state which needs

legitimation or from the perspective of a state-to-be. The weakness of the organizational centres that form the state structures in several Pacific countries relates to the inchoate character of national cultures to which the case studies in this book testify. They demonstrate how various discourses are co-opted in the national project of rewriting individual biographies and identities to incorporate models of the citizen. The nation, however, is plainly not always strong enough to effectively accomplish that cooptation. Nationality may remain a subordinate sub-text rather than an enframing text, in Pacific narratives of history, tradition, and modernity.

NOTE

1. Western Samoa has about the same population size as Vanuatu, around 170,000, whereas the Cook Islands have little more than 17000 residents. As a comparison, Papua New Guinea counts close to four million citizens.

Chapter One
The Tyranny of Tradition: Critical Reflections on Nationalist Narratives in the South Pacific

Stephanie Lawson

> Sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts.
>
> Salman Rushdie (1982)

INTRODUCTION

Nationalist narratives in the contemporary South Pacific very often revolve around a reified concept of 'tradition'-a construct which draws on a range of notions concerning culture, custom, ethnicity, and identity. Arguments which urge the pre-eminence of tradition in underscoring the distinctive national ethos of various island peoples are often grounded in the idea that the reassertion of 'traditional' ways represents a break away from the negative, and usually racist, legacies of colonial rule towards the construction or reconstruction of a confident, positive, and in some senses 'authentic' national identity for former colonial peoples. Edward Said has posed the question: '[H]ow does a culture seeking to become independent of imperialism imagine its own past?' There are, as Said goes on to illustrate, a number of choices—some more attractive than others. One of the less appealing modes is that which is pursued through the discovery and narration of an 'essential, pre-colonial self'. This produces, in turn, various kinds of nativistic, radical, or fundamentalist nationalisms (Said 1994:258).

It should be stressed that these processes are not confined exclusively to the domestic arena, or contained within the confines of a 'nation-state'. At a regional level, we often find broader conceptual entities around which various contemporary

expressions of identity can also be moulded-such as the 'Melanesian Way' or the 'Pacific Way'. These resemble supra-national formulations developed elsewhere in postcolonial situations to counter the derogatory image of a colonial past. Of these, the *Négritude* movement represents a prime example of a conceptual construction which, drawing on an array of suitable symbols, sought in the affirmation of a broad African identity an effective antidote to the sense of inferiority imposed by colonialism and, in the worst cases, by slavery. According to Balandier, the kind of traditionality invoked in contexts of this kind does not 'reveal the survival of primordial groups'. Rather, it provides a framework for a 'reactional existence' which has less significance in itself than in reference to the postcolonial condition (Balandier 1970:173). Nonetheless, the narration of a distinctive tradition, whether it is reactional, contrived, 'inauthentic', or romanticized, can be construed as an important part of the process of psychological liberation and independence. Certainly, the affirmation of an inverted 'we-they' distinction has been exceptionally useful to the successful prosecution of anti-imperial causes (Clifford 1988:261).

Whatever merits there may be in the use of a reified concept of tradition as a symbol of liberation from colonial subordination and the reclamation of an independent character, however, there are certainly some very unattractive aspects of the phenomenon as well. As suggested above, tradition provides, among other things, a basis for the assertion of particular local, national, or regional identities, and these are frequently linked to some form of ethnic identity. In this, the usual array of objective components in the make-up of ethnic identity, such as common language, religion, ancestral lands and so on, are available as differentiating criteria. But the primary factor in maintaining a distinctive sense of group identity is the idea of a unique national history which is expressed and narrated through the concept of tradition. In turn, this may underscore claims to special entitlements and privileges in relation to such issues as territory, autonomy, preferential treatment, and so forth—and developments of this kind are not necessarily positive or productive. Certainly, any substantive recognition of a

sub-group's special relationship to the state is at odds with democratic notions of popular sovereignty and political equality, and is clearly incompatible with the concepts of human rights now upheld in principle by the United Nations (van den Burghe cited in Ryan 1990:30; Mulgan 1989:380). Whether these notions or concepts can be held to be universally valid is another question, especially where their basic principles are said to be contrary to a pre-existing (and thus putatively more legitimate) political order.

Problems of the kind described above are obviously not peculiar to the Pacific—nor are they confined to the circumstances of postcolonialism in the South. Very little insight is needed to recognize that the conditions of post-communism in the former USSR and parts of Eastern Europe have been especially conducive to reactive and sometimes violently aggressive manifestations of atavistic phenomena associated with 'ethnohistories' in which the idea of tradition-incorporating the historical pre-eminence of culture and custom—has been used to legitimate a range of claims about territory, sovereignty, and 'living space', and to justify such measures as 'ethnic cleansing'. In some cases, the politicization of culture has reached the point where it takes precedence over all other claims, and is virtually the sole determinant of the community's moral universe (Schopflin 1991:52). Furthermore, the question of past injustices—which concern alleged historical crimes against a community and which live on in the present through the collective memory of its members—itself becomes a tradition of an ongoing apportioning of blame against an 'other' community's descendants (Connerton 1989:9). Peace negotiation processes in places like Azerbaijan, for example, have been beset by such questions as who really 'owned' Karabakh in the twelfth century, thereby allowing memories or visions of the past 'to dominate the present at the risk of destroying the future' (Transcaucasus' 1992:6). And in what used to be Yugoslavia, perceptions of allegedly discontinuous and disparate histories, traditions, and cultures, together with imaginative recollections and narrations of past collective crimes committed by the ancestors of one group against another, and freshly resurrected concerns about cultural pollution or contamination by 'others',

has led to the elevation of ethnically-determined sovereignty as the highest value worthy of pursuit, and without regard to its cost (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992).

Another issue of concern, and one of the main points of the present discussion, is that the powerful symbolic force embodied in the idea of tradition can be used not only as an instrument of psychological liberation in the context described earlier, but also as an instrument of repression insofar as it functions to subordinate the aspirations and interests of ordinary people to those who 'traditionally' occupy positions of high status and privilege. In other words, the use of 'tradition' as a benchmark against which the legitimacy and authority of institutions, office-holders, power brokers, and so forth are judged or endorsed can serve very easily to entrench the interests of an indigenous elite at the expense of other interests. This is hardly an original insight, and contemporary literature on the Pacific is replete with observations that the mystique of custom or tradition is often manipulated for the purpose of sanctifying a particular political order and legitimizing the aspirations of ruling elites (e.g. Ward 1992:90; Keesing 1989; Babadzan 1988; Lawson 1990). Nor is it an insight which is in any way confined to the Pacific. There is also a considerable body of literature on politics in Africa which deals with identical themes (esp. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), while in at least one Asian polity there have been attempts by elites to resurrect political 'traditions' related to Confucian ethics for the transparently instrumental purpose of repressing political opposition.[1]

In addition, the political uses to which the past can be put, especially in terms of the legitimation of authority and status, have been evident in virtually all civilizations for which there are written records. Citing the propensity for maintaining genealogical records by ruling elites from antiquity to the present, Plumb emphasizes the extent to which the 'acquisition of the past by the ruling classes' and the 'exclusion of the mass' from its sanctifying prestige and charisma, has been a widespread phenomenon throughout recorded time (1969:30–1). Furthermore, the propensity to legitimate present political claims by fabricating suitable traditions

is scarcely confined to relatively 'new' nations. Melman's study of the 'Anglo-Saxon tradition' highlights the fact that even in some of the oldest national communities, exemplified in the so-called 'mature nations', this process has been evident in the definition and re-definition of identity and of those who are entitled to claim membership in the group (1991:575). This indicates that the simplistic portrayal of tradition as the logical antithesis of modernity and the 'Western' is quite wrong. To illustrate this more clearly, we will next explore the basic idea of tradition, its construction in opposition to modernity, and its function as a political ideology in contemporary politics.

THE IDEA OF TRADITION

In its English usage, 'tradition' implies the general idea of 'handingdown' or transmitting from one generation to the next-an understandingwhich has survived from the several senses of the original Latin noun (seeWilliams 1976:268). According to Krygier, a tradition has three essentialcharacteristics. The first is the 'pastness' of a tradition's contents (or atleast a belief by its participants that its origins lie deep in the past). Thesecond is a belief in the authoritative presence of the past in contemporarylife, without which it can have little significance for the participants. Thethird characteristic consists in a belief that the contents of a tradition havebeen continuously transmitted from the past to the present, and notsimply unearthed from a past discontinuous with the present (Krygier1986:240). Taken together, these characteristics are said to form a *living*tradition, much of which is assimilated by present participants with littleor no conscious awareness. Krygier remarks that the assimilation oftradition in this manner often provides it with a more powerful andpervasive presence, since it is absorbed simply as an obvious and naturalpart of the familiar world. Furthermore, this applies to a whole range ofmoral, religious, and political beliefs and practices, as well as toideologies, legal traditions, scientific procedures, and the 'vast culturalinheritances they embody' (Krygier 1986:245–6).

In this respect, all societies have traditions that contribute to a complex system of norms which guide belief and action. As

suggested above, therefore, it is important to recognize the extent to which tradition is a feature of virtually all social life, and that its influence can scarcely be confined to those societies designated as 'traditional' in contrast with those called 'modern' or 'rational' or 'Western'. Vital elements of traditionality inevitably pervade even the most apparently 'rational' social and political practices, as well as bodies of thought concerned with science, art, literature and so forth. Enlightenment thinking, which opposed traditionalist political thought in so many ways in favour of 'rationalist' ideas, has itself become a tradition of thought. And even the modernist idea of a 'leap of progress' cannot obscure the fact that change and innovation do not have the character of a standing long jump (Pelikan 1948:81; Popper 1972). Furthermore, it is quite clear that the traditionality involved in the 'celebration of exemplary recurrence' is as much a feature of 'modern' societies as it is of so-called traditional societies—perhaps even more so. The enthusiasm with which modern elites from all parts of the globe embrace the spectacle of ritual through ceremonies, parades, marches, festivals, the celebration of anniversaries, flag-saluting, and so forth, is testimony to the compelling symbolism of these events as reminders of the continuity between the present and a suitable historic past (Connerton 1989:51, 64).

TRADITION VERSUS MODERNITY

Despite the ubiquity of tradition as a basis for social life, there persists a widespread understanding of the term as something that stands in a dichotomous relation to modernity. This owes much to Weber's influential treatment of traditional authority as 'irrational' insofar as it relies for its normative force on a system of archaic and therefore apparently inviolable norms whose pious and unquestioning observance is enjoined automatically on members of the historical community (Weber 1948:296). In other words, acceptance of authority in this way is not subject to any 'rational' or reasoned decision–largely because one cannot choose rationally to follow the dictates of an authority in the absence of any other alternatives to choose from. Following this general line, others have suggested that an established authority may have such a

complete grip on a person's mind that it will not occur to her that there are any external standards (such as natural rights), against which the structure can be judged. In this case, the nature of the authority relationship is such that she simply does not recognize that she is able to judge at all and therefore ascribes an unconditional validity to all established political or social arrangements (Friedman 1990:73).[2]

It is worth noting at this point that if this is an accurate assessment of how traditional authority operated to secure the acquiescence of its subjects in times where there were few, if any, conditions or opportunities for these subjects to extend their cognitive capacities, there can be no question that in the contemporary Pacific these conditions no longer obtain. Virtually all Pacific islanders are at least aware that alternative systems of authority operate elsewhere and that their own particular system (whether labelled 'traditional' or not), is only one among many possible systems. Some would be quick to point out that Pacific island communities in the pre-contact era were obviously aware that other systems of authority operated in other places. There was, after all, frequent and sometimes extensive contact between these different communities, each of which had their own particular set of local customs and practices. But nothing in these earlier confontations presented such a fundamental challenge to existing socio-political structures as have some Western ideas, especially those concerning liberal-democracy. Howard points out that the once-isolated peoples of the Pacific have now been exposed to a multiplicity of world views, 'ranging from the highly particularistic and provincial to cosmopolitan universalism', and broadening the parameters of cultural experience from relatively closed, and in some cases redundant modes, to a relatively open and much more diversified or pluralistic mode (Howard 1990: 275).

To return to the main theme of this section, it is evident that the concept of traditional authority (as well as charismatic authority) stands in distinct contrast to the idea of 'modern' legal-rational authority, the legitimacy of which is based on the institutionalization of impersonal rules. Indeed, much of the

Western political 'tradition' has been concerned with the basic problem of how power can best be depersonalized (see Sartori 1987:430). In modern democratic theory, the rule of law operates not only to shift the locus of power from the personal sphere to the institutional, but also to set constraints on the exercise of power, as well as providing for the legal (and non-violent) removal of rulers through periodic elections by the citizenry. In addition, the depersonalization of political power serves the important purpose of demystifying and secularizing political authority, thereby rendering it independent of some kind of divinely sanctioned hierarchy. The normative consequences that follow from this conceptualization of 'rational authority' are embodied in the familiar modern theories of constitutionalism, popular sovereignty, political equality, civil rights, and so forth. This is not to deny that actual democratic practice very often 'throws a dark light on democratic theory' (Duncan 1983:3). Certainly, critical reflection on the glaring deficiencies of liberal-democracy's development in the West is, and is likely to remain, a vital task for any democratic theorist—notwithstanding Fukuyama's absurdly optimistic proclamation of the 'end of history' following the collapse of communism and the almost universal (but largely rhetorical) affirmation of democracy as the most desirable form of government (Fukuyama 1992).

These questions aside, there remains nonetheless a clear *conceptual* distinction between the types of authority outlined above. But to apply the formalized schema proposed by Weber and others in a wholesale manner to describe the differences, say, between East and West, between the First World and the Third World, or between 'traditional' societies and 'modern' societies, is to grossly over-homogenize each of these entities and to impose a radical disjunction between them which is not necessarily warranted. The notion of 'radical alterity' perpetuated in some anthropological studies is clearly reminiscent of nineteenth-century dogmas which Leach describes as wrongly establishing 'a clear-cut discontinuity between "traditional", "mythopoetic", "preliterate" societies (which are studied by anthropologists) and "modern", "historical", "literate", "progressive" societies (which are studied

by historians, sociologists and political scientists)' (Leach 1982: 17). More specifically, the conceptualization of the former as inert and 'pre-political' entities which stand in sharp antithetical contrast to those which have undergone 'modernization', inevitably produces a very misleading dichotomization of whole societies and our way of thinking about them (Pocock 1975:338).

The essentialist fallacies derived from the rigid distinction between the traditional and the modern have often been used to construct an orientalist distinction between the West (depicted as modern and rational) and many parts of the Rest (depicted as traditional and irrational) (see Said 1978). In other words, the distinction is, as Carrier points out, a product of the juxtaposition of two opposed and mutually exclusive entities which are understood in reified, essentialist terms. This provides the means not only by which Westerners define themselves vis-à-vis Others, but also the means by which Others define themselves vis-à-vis the West, the latter being an inversion of orientalism which produces a kind of 'occidentalism' (Carrier 1992:196). Clearly, these are not neutral categories—they carry with them a political salience which is activated as circumstances require. In the case of Pacific island nations like Fiji, 'tradition'—especially as reflected in the idiom of chiefliness—stands for the natural, authentic expression of Fijian identity as against Western modes. Similarly, the Tongan monarchy and aristocracy together provide a standard for the assertion of an authentic and uniquely Tongan identity, as does the *matai* system for Western Samoa. As a logical corollary, chiefly power and authority assume a legitimacy in opposition to many Western norms associated with democratic politics. It is in this context that the political significance of tradition in much of the contemporary Pacific is best understood, and in which the idea of tradition gains the distinct normative overtones that underscore the ideology of traditionalism.

TRADITION AS IDEOLOGY

As we have seen, the concept of 'tradition' evokes, first and foremost, an image of the historic past, and the linkages between this past and the present through elements of continuity which give

it a certain authoritative status. It follows from this that tradition also implies a strong sense of duty and respect based on reverence for the *age-old* nature of the phenomenon (Williams 1976:268). Thus the very fact that something has been transmitted from generation to generation, or is believed to have been so transmitted, enjoins acceptance of its automatic legitimacy, and is therefore deferred to without argument (see Eisenstadt 1973:2). This may lead to the conception of a tradition as something which, by longestablished practice, acquires a status similar to that of a law (Nardin 1992:6). It is in this sense that the idea of tradition has implications for the normative force of established political authority, and starts to shade into an ideology of traditionalism. For it is implicit in the ideological rendering of tradition that established institutions are seen, not as a potentially alterable set of human constructions, but as a set of 'natural' forms which command the automatic and uncritical allegiance of those who are implicated in them (Connolly 1987:155). A primary feature of traditionalist political doctrines, then, is that they seek, in one way or another, the preservation of what is assumed to be an age-old or time-honoured structure of authority which is, largely by virtue of its alleged antiquity, portrayed as the 'natural' locus of political power. This was a key element in much of the romantic backlash that followed the eighteenth-century European revolution in political thought, and has been a persistent feature of Western conservative ideology. I shall elaborate briefly on this in order to illuminate some aspects of commensurability between important elements of Western political thought and those that pervade contemporary expressions of traditionalism in the Pacific. This is important because although the latter are often constructed in diametric opposition to 'the West', they actually share much in common with conservative Western political thought.

In pre-revolutionary Europe, institutions such as absolute monarchy were underpinned by organic theories of state and society which assimilated power configurations with a pattern of order revealed in the 'natural' world. This naturalistic pattern was grounded firmly in the conception of a hierarchically arranged universe, headed by the Almighty, of which a properly integrated

and unified society was a clear manifestation (Eccleshall 1978:77–8). It followed that the 'entire creation supplied a normative pattern from which humankind could in no way depart', and this included a universal pattern of human inequality in all spheres of life (Eccleshall 1978:78). In addition, the descending thesis of government entailed in the idea of an immutable hierarchical order left those under the authority of the monarch with little choice except to obey any edicts issued from above, and to pass on the duty of obedience to those following (Pocock 1975:334).

Similarly, justification for the duty of deference and submission owed to traditional leaders in the chiefly societies of the Pacific is derived from normative concepts associated with divine authority. In describing (and defending) the traditional role of Fijian chiefs, for example, Ravuvu has stated that the explicit model for chiefs derives directly from divine sources and that power is ascribed only to those close to that source, while the 'relative powerlessness of others is clear by implication' (1987:321). In the contemporary context, the Christian god has of course supplanted the old gods of Fiji, but the nature of divinely sanctioned political authority remains very much the same: 'For there is no authority except from God, and those [governing authorities] that exist have been instituted by God' (Vakatora quoted in Sayes 1984:3). The same arguments for continuing chiefly rule pervades conservative responses to calls for more democratic political practices in Western Samoa and Tonga. In the former, it is said that *matai* receive their titles from God (Ngan-Woo 1985:35), while in Tonga the view perists that members of the ruling elite are 'divinely preconditioned' as social and political leaders (Afeaki 1983:57).

To return for the moment to Europe, Edmund Burke, and other of his contemporaries (writing in the wake of the French Revolution and Enlightenment thinking which had inspired the overthrow of the existing order), propounded a body of conservative doctrine that stressed the extent to which political legitimacy and authority was a product of history and tradition. Indeed, Burke's view emphasized the character of national constitutions in terms that located their validity, not in the 'rationally' constructed documents favoured by disciples of the

Enlightenment, but in the unique historical development of a particular society and its distinctive institutions. Similarly, Russians like Dostoevsky came to believe that their nation had an 'historic, unalterable and "sacred" constitution'-thereby contributing, incidentally, to a lasting antipathy to Western values (Nisbet 1986:27).[3] Again, there is little to distinguish these views from those of some contemporary proponents of particularistic Pacific identities. The major proponent of the 'Melanesian Way', for example, has decried the estrangement and alienation produced by the intrusion of Western values and has urged as a remedy the establishment of 'a philosophical base, founded upon our ancient virtues' without which Melanesians 'stand to perish as a people of unique quality, character and dynamism' (Narakobi 1983a:9). And in Fiji, the new constitutional arrangements, which are clearly contrary to Western democratic norms, are said to have been implemented in order 'to protect the proud traditions that are the core and essence of being a Fijian' (Ravuvu 1991:92).

It is evident from the foregoing that an important element of traditionalist doctrines, and one which is also fundamental to nationalist ideology, is the claim to uniqueness made on behalf of a group's cultural traditions. Again, modern renderings of this notion in Western political thought developed largely as a reaction to certain elements of Enlightenment thinking–especially those concerned with universalism. Herder's conception of the *Volk,* for example, was central to his insistence that 'human civilization lives not in its universal but in its national and peculiar manifestations'. From here, the subsequent development of nationalist doctrine moved relentlessly towards the glorification of 'the particular and the parochial, national differences and national individualities' (Kohn 1982:931) As Taylor points out, however, the particularity of applications is covered by the universality of the core concepts (Taylor 1989:193). Thus the idiosyncracy of each and every 'nation' with its unique core of traditions is celebrated in ideologically generic terms. The emphasis on particularity also operates as an essential mechanism in the nationalist project of determining who is 'in' and who is 'out'—for nationalism logically demands inclusionary and exclusionary devices suitable for

establishing the authentic membership of the group while at the same time justifying the rejection of the 'other(s)' as alien.

To again take the example of Fiji, contemporary nationalists there who affirm and promote a distinct and unique 'tradition' as the core element of their identity, and who judge the authenticity of its heirs in terms of their biological descent, clearly have much in common with some of the earlier reactionary and conservative critics of the Enlightenment. Specifically, the value of 'tradition' is once again pitted broadly against many elements of the 'modern' which have their contemporary roots in Enlightenment thought. Of these elements, the most significant in the present context is the form of rule which more or less predominates in the West, namely democracy. The rejection of Western democratic norms in favour of a political system which discriminates systematically against almost half of Fiji's present population is done so in the name of tradition. It is something of an irony, however, that this is nonetheless justified largely by reference to the doctrine of indigenous rights-a doctrine derived directly from the cluster of Western ideas encompassing natural rights and human rights.

Developments of the kind described above attest to the efficacy of 'tradition' in the selective fashioning of the past to suit particular political agendas and interests in the present (see Linnekin 1992:251). I am not suggesting that all expressions of traditionality have a consciously instrumental character, or even that all instrumental uses of tradition deserve the kind of critical attention implicit in the present discussion. Furthermore, similar criticisms can be applied across a range of conceptual entities, including 'democracy', A proper discussion of these issues, however, merits a great deal more space than is available here, and so I will confine the substance of the next section to the 'invention of tradition' debate—a debate which has been a special concern for anthropologists in recent years and which is clearly central to the issues raised here.[4] Again, while the scope of this debate is considerable, I will deal only briefly with some aspects of it here.[5]

THE INVENTION OF TRADITION

The controversy concerning the use of the term 'invention' in relation to contemporary expressions of tradition gained much of its momentum through the work of Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds, 1983) and Keesing and Tonkinson (eds, 1982). The critical treatment of fabricated traditions in these works has prompted some objections to the dichotomous formulation of 'real' as opposed to 'invented' traditions on the grounds that this dichotomy reproduces earlier errors of essentialism and implicitly supports fatal impact theses (see Jolly 1992b). In addition, there are responses which point out that it is not only difficult to conceive of any tradition that is not, ultimately, invented or constructed, but that the notion of invention also implies that it is somehow 'less real and less potent than those which are not' (Kapferer 1988:210). Others have noted the inflammatory properties of the term, in that it 'inescapably implies something fictitious, "made up", and therefore not real' (Linnekin 1992:249). To apply the term to any given context can therefore carry with it implicit accusations that a kind of fraud is being committed on the part of those who uphold or affirm the 'tradition' in question. Furthermore, for an 'outsider' to proffer critiques of invented traditions is bound to invite appeals to cultural relativism on the one hand, and retorts and accusations of epistemological imperialism or some other gratuitous, neo-colonialist insult which offends the sensitivities of the bearers of these traditions on the other. The position taken here, however, is one which ascribes no privilege to any observer or participant, least of all to those who are, in one way or another, the political beneficiaries of the tradition in question.[6]

Another issue is one raised by Margaret Jolly where she points out that there is no good reason why church hymns, the mass, and Bislama, along with pagan songs and indigenous languages, should not now be seen as part of Pacific tradition (1992b:53). In other words, this begs the 'so what' question about neotraditional or introduced structures, and reminds us that tradition is a fluid and dynamic phenomenon, and not fixed in some absolute form. But this is precisely the point that needs to be made in relation to

traditionalism—which is the ideological rendering of a reified notion of 'tradition' which makes it appear rigid and unchanging. A further 'so what' question concerns the relative status of 'real' as opposed to 'invented' traditions. For example, what if institutions such as the Council of Chiefs in Fiji were indeed found to be continuous with a 'genuinely' traditional pre-colonial or pre-contact institution, and not simply a body set up under colonial rule? And what if the Tongan constitution was able to be attached more firmly and convincingly to pre-nineteenth century Tongan traditions rather than to Hawaiian and British models. Would that force the critic of 'invented traditions' to acknowledge its superior legitimacy in the present?

If critiques of invented traditions were limited merely to the exposure of fabrications and the authentication of 'real' traditions, the answer may well be in the affirmative. The point of the present discussion, however, is not simply to identify 'false' traditions, and to expose the institutions of contemporary political institutions in the Pacific as colonial inventions or copies of other systems, but to criticize the normative perspective that accords automatic legitimacy to practices allegedly blessed with the mantle of antiquity. In other words, it is a critique of the ideology of traditionalism—an ideology which, like the theory of the unchangeability of human nature, operates through a rigid doctrine of predestination which condemns people to fixed and immutable modes of expression (see Dewey 1965:89–90). It is in this sense that the normative force of tradition imposes a kind of tyranny on the non-elite people of some Pacific island societies, both indigenous as well as non-indigenous. For each and every person can be assigned a fixed identity derived from a particular narration of the past, which in turn determines the scope and manner of their political expression for both the present and the future.

CONCLUSION

Depending on the issues at stake, it is evident that the past can be mined for precedents or practices which support particular interests in the present and point to certain paths to be followed in

the future. In this sense the past, which is understood and narrated in terms of 'tradition', is something of a reservoir out of which certain items can be selected and defrosted for the right occasion. It is important to emphasize, however, that not just any past will do. The past may appear in an inconvenient form—it may have 'to be manipulated, fiddled with, to make it serve' before it can be presented as the 'exemplary past' and thus serve as an appropriate model for the present (Nixon 1990:1–2). In light of the previous discussion, it is also clear that access to the reservoir of the past is not open to all. There are guardians of this reservoir whose present status ostensibly allows them to claim exclusive rights regarding the authoritative interpretation of the past, and who therefore claim a special position in relation to 'tradition'. Access to positions of status and power is therefore restricted to those incumbents who are 'recognized as the legitimate interpreters of tradition as well as forgers of the legitimate contents and symbols of the social and cultural orders' (Eisenstadt 1973:5).

I suggested at the beginning of the discussion that the reassertion of 'the traditional' as a way of narrating nationalist images in Pacific societies has been a significant factor in countering the negative images surrounding the worth of former colonized peoples and the intrinsic value of many of their own cultural practices, and that the celebration of a distinctive tradition has been a vital element in the process of psychological liberation. While this should not be lost sight of, it is nonetheless equally important to maintain a critical perspective on all aspects of 'insider' narrations, especially when political interests are at stake. This is one of the things which Gellner, among others, is so concerned to stress when he targets the 'excessive indulgence in contextual charity' that can be produced by 'outsiders' blindly embracing the doctrine of cultural relativism and all that is implied by it (Gellner 1970:42). I can think of no better way to conclude than by quoting a perceptive comment on these issues, and on the ironies with which they are infused, that has been made recently by a Pacific historian reflecting on 'tradition' in contemporary Tonga:

> Too many romantic historians unjustifiably, but in good heart, see indigenous people as artefacts and objects. They

romanticize this love of tradition, a tradition that keeps us in our place. After all the years of teaching that we are primitive and have an inferior culture to that of the Europeans, all of a sudden we are told that our culture is beautiful, that we should go back and live by it (Kolo 1990:6).

NOTES

1. James Cotton has noted attempts in Singapore 'to reinvent Confucianism for a population never especially familiar with it' (1991:320). For a more extensive analysis see Lawson (1993a).
2. Friedman also points out that this is what Hegel described as a pre-autonomous stage of consciousness in which the subject is quite unaware or her own capacity for moral judgement or choice.
3. In these theoretical schemes, incidentally, there is no necessary opposition between nature and culture as there is in so many other Western metaphysical constructs—see Horigan (1988:2).
4. For a brief survey of this debate, see Jolly and Thomas (1992).
5. I have discussed this issue more extensively in an earlier paper (see Lawson 1993b).
6. For a more elaborate justification of this position, see Lawson (1993b).

CHAPTER TWO
After the Tidal Wave': Bernard Narokobi and the Creation of a Melanesian Way

Ton Otto

WE, THE PEOPLE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA--

- united in one nation
- pay homage to the memory of our ancestors—the source of our strength and origin of our combined heritage
- acknowledge the worthy customs and traditional wisdoms of our people—which have come down to us from generation to generation
- pledge ourselves to guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now.

By authority of our inherent right as ancient, free and independent peoples

WE, THE PEOPLE, do now establish this sovereign nation and declare ourselves, under the guiding hand of God, to be the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

(Preamble to the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea)

Our ways are not so varied and contradictory as many have claimed. Our themes of unity spring not from the nation-state, the common currency, common banks, and the police and the military institutions. It is not even based on a common language. These facilitate unity, but they do not make it.

> Our common unity has been at work thousands of years ago. We are a united people because of our common vision. True enough, it has never been written.
> (Narokobi 1980:16)

INTRODUCTION

In a richly illustrated book produced on the occasion of Independence by the Office of Information of the Papua New Guinea government (1976) one chapter is titled 'Nationhood'. It deals with political and constitutional developments from 1945 to 1974. Not a single word is spent, however, on the cultural aspects of nationhood, particularly the issue of shaping a national identity. The author of the chapter, who is a Papua New Guinean 'national' (which has become the generally accepted term to distinguish citizens from expatriates), appears to identify independent statehood with nationhood. However, on 16 September 1975, at the proclamation of independence, the process of imagining the nation (Anderson 1991) had barely begun.

The conflation of independence and nationality was quite common. It was, for example, reproduced in schoolbooks published by the Department of Education. But some of the political leaders were well aware that the new political situation required new cultural constructs to provide legitimacy to the postcolonial state. Of course the new state adopted the common and indispensable symbols of nationality, such as a national flag and anthem. During countless small rituals the flag has been raised, and the anthem has been sung at the start of the day in community schools around the country. Education is one the strongest instruments a state has; moreover, as Anderson (1991) suggests, the teachers themselves, who in Papua New Guinea are often from a different ethnic group, come to represent (and perhaps identify with) the larger, national community. State rituals and institutions also provide many occasions on which national images can be conjured, for example during census-taking, elections and independence celebrations.

However, a new state requires more than rituals and administrative routines to forge a national identity; it also needs a

specific narrative (Bhabha 1990). A theme that emerged in the lead-up to independence among the political and intellectual elite was that of respect for—but not uncritical adherence to-traditional values. Papua New Guinea leaders claimed that they would run the government differently because of their cultural background.[1] This theme was influenced by African and Black American literature and also by some Western and African intellectuals working in Port Moresby as university lecturers or, more rarely, as public servants (Otto 1991:236–241). Although tradition was certainly not the only, nor even the most central, issue in the 1972 pre-independence election campaigns, this theme was judged important enough to be incorporated into the national constitution (see the preamble quoted above, and the fifth national goal called 'Papua New Guinea Ways').

The new ideas about tradition and national identity were communicated through books, newspapers and radio programmes. In this way they were distributed from the urban centres—mainly Port Moresby—to provincial towns and rural villages. The use of the written word remained largely restricted to the educated elite, but via administrative centres and schools the elite discourse was dispersed to the wider population. The most important medium of mass communication in Papua New Guinea was and still is the radio, which is listened to in villages everywhere in the country (as long as the batteries are not flat).

In this chapter, I am mainly concerned with the ideas of Bernard Narokobi, who was influential in the time around independence and who has continued to play a significant political role. More importantly, through his writings he has made a major contribution to the discussion about a Papua New Guinean identity. He is generally considered as the father and the most outspoken propagator of the concept of a Melanesian Way. His ideological influence is probably considerable: most Papua New Guinea intellectuals I asked about him are familiar with his ideas.

The basis of the following discussion is a thorough text analysis of 45 short articles which first appeared in the daily journal the *Post-Courier* from 1976 to 1978. These articles were collected and edited by Henry Olela, an African lecturer in Philosophy at the

University of Papua New Guinea, in a book titled *The Melanesian Way: Total Cosmic Vision of Life*. In addition to these articles, I read other publications by Narokobi and interviewed him on 2 July 1992 when he was the Minister for Justice in the Namaliu Government[2] Before presenting the results of my analysis I discuss some aspects of Narokobi's personal development.

BERNARD NAROKOBI

Bernard Narokobi was born in Wautogik, a village in the Arapesh area of Wewak District in East Sepik Province, probably in 1943 (May 1989:211). After completing his secondary education in Rabaul he was awarded a scholarship to study in Australia. He became one of the first Papua New Guineans to graduate in law. In the early seventies he was involved in the formulation of the national constitution as the only indigenous member of a team of four permanent consultants to the Constitutional Planning Committee. He had a varied and very successful professional career in which he served as chairman of the Law Reform Commission and chairman of the National Cultural Council. Further he held positions as a private lawyer, provincial planner, professor of Melanesian Philosophy at the University of Papua New Guinea and justice of the High Court.

In 1982 he took part in the national elections as a candidate for the Melanesian Alliance, but lost against Michael Somare in the contest for the East Sepik Provincial seat. At the next elections, in 1987, he entered Parliament as member for Wewak Open and he became Minister for Justice in 1988 under Rabbie Namaliu as prime minister. In 1992 he was re-elected but did not become a member of the new government formed by Paias Wingti. Narokobi was apparently the chief architect of a successful court challenge of Wingti's ploy to resign suddenly as chief minister and be reelected immediately thereafter in order to avoid the chance of being ousted by a vote of no-confidence. Sir Julius Chan was elected as the new prime minister and he appointed Bernard Narokobi as the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock in his cabinet, which he announced on 7 September 1994. Less than a year later, in July 1995, Narokobi and four other ministers were

sacked from cabinet because they had opposed the new bill on provincial and local government reforms.

During his professional career Narokobi often demonstrated his capacity to think critically and independently. Here I am particularly concerned with the roots of his thinking about a Melanesian Way. How did he come to feel the need for a Melanesian identity which should, as he saw it, facilitate the emancipation of Melanesians from Western cultural dominance? When I asked him about this (interview 2/7/92), he began by mentioning that he had been away from home for many years in order to receive a Western-style education. After attending primary school in his home region, he went to Rabaul in East New Britain for secondary education. While he was studying law in Australia, he began to reflect on the nature of human society, on 'what holds societies together and what constituted Papua New Guinea.' He felt that there was 'something very unique' about his country that was not yet written about by anthropologists and others. This awareness further developed and crystallized when he travelled widely in Papua New Guinea from 1971 to 1973 as part of the preparations for the formulation of a constitution, and during his later travels in other Melanesian countries.

The reasons Narokobi gives for his developing awareness are threefold. First there was his removal from his native village and thus from his own culture, followed by an immersion in the Western world through education. As a result of this widening of his horizons he began to ponder his origins and started a search for what made his people different from others. At this stage he realized that he was perceiving 'his people' in Western terms. Therefore the quest for his origins became a quest for a new cultural identity. Finally, he found confirmation and consolidation during his frequent travels in the region; not only are Melanesians clearly different from Westerners, they also have something substantial in common that warrants the use of a common term: the Melanesian Way. Alienation, education and travel are the aspects of Narokobi's life history that motivated him to forge a new cultural identity. It is a road made possible as well as imperative by the (neo)colonial situation.

The dual basis of his new identity, indigenous and Western, is reflected in Narokobi's ambivalent attitude towards colonialism. On the one hand he contrasts the new identity sharply with the dominant Western ideology, and this explains the oppositional character of his prose. On the other hand, he also shows appreciation of the accomplishments of Western culture and of the positive effects of colonialism. Both in the interview in 1992, and in his *Post-Courier* articles he uses the metaphor of a tidal wave to indicate the overpowering and destructive force of colonialism as well as its positive and liberating impact.[3] In the interview he concluded his explanation of his own development as follows:

> What was my motivation? I think a realization, maybe idyllic, maybe romantic…a realization that PNG was no longer going to be the same. That the ancient past was going to be changed forever. And I spoke of the tidal wave. The tidal wave expression comes very naturally to me, the tidal wave being the modern civilizational impact. That civilizational impact coming like a huge tidal wave and when the wave comes, the tidal wave comes, it brings with it debris and deposits some good things and some bad things too. And the task I saw and I still see now is the task of a man with the digging tool, the man with the spade who then digs up this debris and makes something good out of this, so that rather than complain that Western civilization or modernization was negative, rather we take it as a wave, and my direction and my vision has always been to make something good out of the old and the new.

As I will show below, this kind of ambivalence, or rather this belief that opposites can and must coexist and that they may be transformed into a new synthesis, is typical of Narokobi's thought. An opposition that is pertinent to the discussion about Narokobi's personal development is the relationship between individual and group, How does Narokobi perceive the tension between the concept of a Melanesian Way—a fundamentally collective phenomenon—and his attempts as a creative individual to give shape to this collective identity?

In *The Melanesian Way* volume the first-person-plural personal pronouns are the most frequently occurring substantive words (thus excluding 'the' and 'a'). The first-person-singular pronouns (I, me, my) are much less frequently used (the ratio is three to ten). Narokobi predominantly uses the we-form to formulate his vision; therefore, in rhetorical form at least, he assumes the authority to write on behalf of a group. At the same time he describes his role as an artist and a writer who wants 'to create a new society, based on the new and the old/ In the interview we returned to this apparent contradiction. Narokobi explained that particularly in jural matters his authority to formulate a 'Melanesian norm' concerning a particular question had often been challenged by his Western colleagues. His answer to this challenge was:

> I am the authority, I am the point of reference and I am the source because I am the living Melanesian. (…) I cannot go to somebody else because that somebody else's story is not in writing. (…) So I say: if there is a disagreement, I represent the community, the Melanesian People. My perception—as long as it is honest, it is not misconceived, it is not calculated to deceive and trick—then that norm is applicable.

Narokobi tries to reconcile the opposites, attempting to mediate this contradiction by claiming that the group is somehow present in him as an individual: as a living Melanesian he has the authority to represent the group because that which defines the 'groupness' is actualized in the individual group members. In a clever move the shared identity of an imagined community is located in its—equally imagined—members: thus the contradiction is resolved.

EMANCIPATION

One of the most striking characteristics of *The Melanesian Way* as a text is its oppositional character. Narokobi apparently imposed upon himself the task of defending an imagined 'we' against an-equally imagined-'them'.

> We do not derive our culture from them. We do not derive our civilization, our laws and our values from them. It is

> because of what we are that we can embrace the 20th Century and beyond (1980:16).

'Them' refers to various agents or representatives of colonial and metropolitan powers. 'We' denotes of course the Melanesians, whose identity the author is determined to define. A simple word-count underscores the oppositional structure of Narokobi's prose. The various forms of the first-person-plural personal pronoun ('we', 'us', and including the possessive form 'our') clearly top a frequency list of substantive words in all the analysed documents. They are closely followed by the pronouns 'they', 'them', and 'their'. The opposition between 'them' and 'us' is frequently expressed in the form of a negation: 'we' are not what 'they' are. For example:

> In spite of our intergroup fights, it must be realized that Melanesian societies are non-exploitative, non-acquisitive and non-colonialist (1980:25).

This kind of antithetical mirroring, which inevitably leads to caricatures, is a common feature of intercultural situations in which reciprocal identities are being constructed. In a colonial setting, both the colonizing power and the indigenous population employ the mechanism of inversion to articulate their own and each others' identities (cf. Gramsci 1971, Guha 1983, Thomas 1992). Both parties play the same game of signification, but they do not take part in it on equal terms. The asymmetries of colonial power relations give greater weight to colonial images and meaning constructions than to indigenous ones. Therefore anti-colonial movements often use colonial discourse which they invert and direct against the colonizer. They have to create a mental space for their own new identities on an ideological battle ground which is dominated by the concepts of their opponents. Another reason for the dominance of colonial discourse is that the groups who lead the anti-colonial struggle are largely a product of colonial history. Colonialism created the preconditions for its own subversion through the indigenization of its institutional apparatus,

that is by training local people as policemen, teachers, administrators and magistrates.

Although Narokobi wrote his *Post-Courier* articles after Papua New Guinea had gained political independence, they breathe an overwhelmingly anti-colonial spirit.

> Praise be to our colonizers for their far-sightedness. Praise be to our colonizers for their liberal-mindedness. Praise be to our metropolitan masters for their vision to free us from their bondage. In fact, nothing has changed.
>
> Papua New Guineans are entering much greater bondage now than ever before. The master-servant relationships continue (1980:26).

One conspicuous aspect of this continuing dependency was the presence of a great number of expatriate advisers, consultants and public servants, particularly in the highest echelons of the government and of the private sector. In addition, the state of Papua New Guinea was to a large extent financially dependent on foreign (mainly Australian) aid, while most capital-intensive enterprises were in foreign hands. Narokobi, however, directed his criticism not only at these external marks of continuing subordination. He realized that colonialism also continued at another level, namely in the minds of the people. Colonial relations, attitudes and values had been internalized by the colonial subjects.

> Melanesians of today are so thoroughly colonized and indoctrinated with Western opium that they see, if they care to see at all, their ways as negative, shameful and so low down the human scale of values that they reject them blindly and embrace Western ideologies (1980:19).[4]

Narokobi wanted to liberate his fellow Melanesians from their colonial attitude, 'to break the shackles of colonial poison of the mind' (1980:19), which caused them to see themselves primarily as they were depicted by foreigners (ibid.:18). Melanesians had to define their identity autonomously so that at last they would be able to realize the full potential of political independence.

Narokobi's writings were intended to restore basic pride and self-respect that had been subverted by the colonial experience. In the 1992 interview he reiterates this point:[5]

> Part of my writing was aimed at liberating. Not so much political liberation; in fact it was not intended as a political liberation but as a psychological, intellectual liberation, a freedom which enables the scholar to develop concepts.

Narokobi was concerned that the colonial self-image had not only installed a negative valuation of Melanesians' own cultural background, but that it also formed a strong impediment to the creative transformation of that background. To emancipate themselves from their ongoing cultural dependency, Melanesians had to formulate their own 'philosophy', 'theology', 'jurisprudence', etc.; they had to give shape to a Melanesian Way.[6] The fact that Narokobi had to use Western concepts to sketch the contours of such a new culture can be understood in the context of what is said above. Self-identification in opposition to a more powerful opponent is unavoidably cast in terms of the dominant—colonial—ideology. Only after a new ideological space is thus secured can further creative development of indigenous concepts and institutions take place.

In my interview with Narokobi in July 1992 I asked him whether the concept of a Melanesian Way, created in opposition to continuing colonial attitudes and circumstances, still had some relevance in the 1990s when the vigour of Papua New Guinean cultures had become apparent. His answer came as a surprise to me then, but I later realized that it neatly reflected his ideas about the Melanesian Way as a creative process. Appealing to a developing global concern about the environment, he redirected the focus of the emancipatory endeavour from colonialism to technology.

> The perception of a Melanesian identity and liberation is still very, very relevant and valid today. In absolute terms I would say it is even more valid and relevant, because with the ascendancy of money power, spirit power—soul power—

> tends to diminish, and with the ascendancy of technological power over matter and over land, the vision of life in nature, in stones, in rocks, in trees and the environment becomes even more critical.

He claimed that the Melanesian Way harbours a fundamental respect for nature, an 'ecological spirituality' as he chose to call it. This spirituality is an indispensable antidote to technological control over nature, because the latter will inevitably lead to disaster if not contained by ecological values. Narokobi did not stop at this rather fashionable observation. He explained that traditional Melanesian societies were bound by nature to the extent that they could be considered prisoners of their environment. Modern technology has given human beings the power to liberate themselves from this bondage, to 'harness and dominate and control and manage nature'. He found that Melanesians should also make use of modern knowledge and accepted that thereby 'we need to do some damage in order to create new wealth'. This kind of dialectical reasoning, which tries to reconcile apparent opposites, is typical of Narokobi's thinking. Modern technology and traditional knowledge both have their limitations and their advantages. It is necessary to establish a new synthesis in which the complementary opposites are balanced, so that people can use technology while realising:

> that there is a limit beyond which we cannot and must not go in controlling and managing the environment, because it will fight back and it will hit back against man, because man and nature must coexist (int.).

In the context of neocolonial subordination, the Melanesian Way can be seen as a liberation movement; in the context of technological backwardness, the Melanesian Way claims an ecological awareness which is a prerequisite for sound development; in the context of gender inequality the situation is different again. Narokobi openly attacks the women's liberation movement, because he believes that in this field Melanesian women are far more advanced that their Western sisters.

> The funny thing is that the trendy, modernist Melanesian women are trying their best to progress into Western backwardness (1980:73).

> It seems clear to me that the women in Melanesia are far more equal to their men folk than the Western women have ever been or ever will be. What the Melanesian women have achieved, with or without the help of men, seems to me to be far more advanced than the Western female liberationalists. Take a look at any Papua New Guinean village mother, who is smoking a pipe, wearing a mini skirt, is topless and swinging her axe at a heavy log. From a distance you'd think she was a man. What Western woman can do that today (1980:74).

In spite of these rather casual examples alluding to Western images of womanhood, Narokobi's argument is not that Melanesian men and woman are the same. They play sharply distinct but equally valuable and influential roles. These different roles are often mutually exclusive; what men and women do is partly determined by what they are best suited to do because of 'inherent manhood' and 'inherent womanhood'.

In 1992 Narokobi's opinion in this matter appeared to have changed very little:

> I am very critical of the liberation of women ideology. I think that it is misconceived, miscalculated. The Melanesian man and his wife had roles to play in a society which dictates roles that must be played recognizing the physical differences of male and female and recognizing the technological advancement of the times (int).

Narokobi acknowledges that in modern time society's needs have changed and that consequently the roles played by men and women have to change as well. He sees this process underway in Melanesia and therefore he judges Women's Lib redundant Narokobi supports equal opportunity, equal access to education, and equal protection by law. What he opposes, however, is that men and women become the same. He dreads the situation that

men and women, even husband and wife, become competitors for the same jobs. As a consequence, he feels, family life and the upbringing of children suffer. Of course there is a contradiction in this position: equal opportunity versus 'inherent' difference. His solution to this problem reveals his basically conservative male point of view: ultimately woman's place in society is determined by her 'natural' task of rearing the children.

Not surprisingly, some *Post-Courier* readers fundamentally disagreed with Narokobi's vision on gender relations. A 'young woman', studying to become a teacher, wrote a particularly angry response which was pub lished in the newspaper and included in *The Melanesian Way* volume under the heading 'Narokobi's critics'. Introducing her story of how she was given to a man against her will, she wrote:

> You know what men are like. Sitting all day long chewing betel nut, smoking, eating, drinking and fornicating from woman to woman. What else do they need? Of course bride price for their daughters so the money and food can last long. Oh, what a lovely Melanesian life! And what a hell of a life for us women! I am glad that Western civilization is getting deeper and deeper into our country and slowly stopping men like you dreaming of a Melanesian life (1980: 248).

WHAT IS THE MELANESIAN WAY?

Reading Narokobi's texts the question arises what characterizes the new cultural identity: what exactly is the Melanesian Way? In the first article of the 1980 volume Narokobi tackles this question by stating:

> It is now time to reflect more on the Melanesian ways. My first response is-by their actions or omissions, you will know (1980:14).

In other words, the Melanesian Way is what Melanesians do. Although this answer appears evasive, it is in fact an apt description, as I will demonstrate below. Pressed for a precise

definition ('I am often asked') Narokobi refuses at first to give one for several reasons. Because the question often derives from cynicism, he writes, it is a waste of time to try seriously to answer it. More fundamentally, the Melanesian Way is so encompassing that it is futile to attempt to formulate a definition. It is also wrong to do this, because it would erect boundaries, 'outer and inner walls' (1980:17), and thus reduce the phenomenon. Nevertheless, later in the book Narokobi gives in to the wishes 'of those who love definitions' (1980:20). His definition is so broad and encompassing as to make the boundaries for ever open and extendable:

> It is a total cosmic vision of life in which every event within human consciousness has its personal, communal, spiritual, economic, political and social dimensions. It is, by its very nature, inherently open to change (1980:20).

A common criticism of the Melanesian Way is that it represents a chimera. There are so many starkly different cultures in Melanesia, the critics say, that it is simply impossible to talk about a common Melanesian heritage. One line of defence Narokobi employs is to claim that those critics overlook the fundamental issues. The common denominator is not located in specific customs: it has to be sought in the holistic attitude to life itself. 'We are a united people because of our common vision' (1980:16). The diversity is only the surface phenomenon of a deeper underlying unity:

> Indeed there are many languages, many modes of expressing the Melanesian way, but the mode of doing something cannot be confused with the thing itself (1980:20).

Narokobi, however, does not always stick to this answer. We find here the same ambiguity he displayed concerning a definition of the Melanesian Way. In some places he endeavours to list a number of customs that are common to all Melanesians. In the 1992 interview, for example, he referred to the following features that are constitutive of a Melanesian way of life: bride payment (or alternatively, sister exchange); adoption; land laws (communal or

family ownership) and transfer of ownership; polygamy; the reliance on oral tradition in the absence of writing; concepts of the deity; the belief in life after death and in the possibility of communication with the spirits of the dead.[7]

There is also a third kind of answer to which Narokobi sometimes resorts in his defence of the purported unity of the Melanesian Way:

> Even if it is true that there are many Melanesian ways, that diversity or pluralism is *in itself* a Melanesian way. If you accept the singular and assert a coherent Melanesian way, the examiners' assertion that there are so many ways can be demolished this way (1980:20). [my emphasis]

His solution here is to make diversity itself a central characteristic of the Melanesian Way. Hence the contradiction is mediated: it is true that Melanesians are a diverse people but this is precisely one of their defining features. For those who now want to object that one cannot give mutually exclusive answers to the same question, Narokobi has already made his position clear. Discussing the aims of his *Post-Courier* articles he wrote:

> It [the 'Melanesian Voice'] is not intended to be syllogistically logical or consistent; it is meant to be reflective of human life which is experience filled with inconsistencies, contradictions, emotions, reason and intellect (1980:63).

Rather than dismissing Narokobi's reasoning as incoherent and contradictory, it is enlightening to pay close attention to the way he develops his vision of a Melanesian Way by incorporating and mediating apparently antithetical positions. Although this kind of thinking is far removed from the prevalent scientific ideal—except perhaps for a small group of adherents of the 'dialectical' method in philosophy—it may well be that Narokobi's mode of thought is in fact wide-spread and common, also in Western culture. Certainly it is a powerful tool for dealing with the complexities of social life.

One of the main contradictions of the Melanesian Way appears to be that it constitutes a new identity whereas it is simultaneously assumed to be an old and established practice. On the one hand there are many references in *The Melanesian Way* to the creation of a new society, a new vision and a new hope by the artist and the writer (1980:32,33). On the other hand this new way is rooted in the past; it is in fact 'thousands of years' old.

> We are not one year old, nor are we 200 years old. We are thousands of years old. We might be new to modern institutions, but we are not new to human persons' strengths and weaknesses. We have a right and indeed a duty to call on the wisdoms of our ancestors. Collectively we possess the treasures of time tested and proven strengths. These we can use in times of stress and strain to liberate ourselves from oppressive circumstances, of whatever nature or magnitude (1980:14).

The second part of this quotation indicates one of the mediations Narokobi brings to the contradiction. The Melanesian tradition itself is a liberating force which can be used to resist and change oppressive conditions. At the same time Narokobi leaves open the possibility that (part of) the tradition itself may be oppressive. In that case it is very Melanesian to abandon those practices.

> Thirdly, Melanesians are not and have never been slaves to their cultural practices, if they believed these were obstructing them. They liberate themselves by establishing new communities with new hopes and future (1980:15).

A desire for liberation is thus part and parcel of the Melanesian heritage, even if it directs itself against a part of that same heritage. The important mission of Narokobi's Melanesian Way was to restore a proper self-respect among his fellow Melanesians by countering and reversing the dominant, colonially induced, contempt for their own cultural background. He did not mean to replace colonial shackles with traditional ones. In our 1992 interview he returned to these questions. After repeating that there was insufficient appreciation of the values of the old culture when

he wrote his articles, he elaborated on how the old practices have to be changed in order to fit the modern world. Traditional leadership forms, for example, cannot simply be transposed to the contemporary situation, if only because there is an insoluble problem of scale. He appeared disappointed in the amount of 'syncretistic adaptation' that had been accomplished and blamed the 'intellectual laziness' of Melanesians (himself included).

In *The Melanesian Way* Narokobi is more optimistic. Words such as 'new', 'created', 'creation', 'creative' and 'image' occur regularly. Other words like 'artist', 'writer' and 'creator' not only emphasize the openness of the Melanesian Way, but also imply another contradiction discussed above, namely that between individual and group. The continuity that is equally characteristic of the Melanesian Way is expressed in terms like 'old', 'ancient', 'past' and 'thousands of years'. However, the most important concept in this context is that of 'history'. This concept clearly establishes a link with the past but simultaneously allows for the elaboration of differences between the Melanesian and the Western view of the past. In line with the oppositional character of his articles, Narokobi contrasts 'their' history with 'our' history. Colonialism has imposed a Eurocentric concept of history on Melanesians. It is important, Narokobi argues, to reject the discriminatory notion that history only begins with writing. Melanesian have indeed a very long history.

> Our history did not begin with our contact with the Western explorers. Our civilization did not start with the coming of the Christian missionaries. Because we have an ancient civilization, it is important for us to give proper dignity and place to our history. We can only be ourselves if we accept who we are rather than denying our autonomy (1980:62).

The concept of history is thus connected with a sense of dignity and self-respect.[8] It is evident that concepts of history may play an important role in the construction of a group identity. If a group is fighting for emancipation from domination, the presence of a hegemonic view of history will stimulate the articulation of alternative histories. In the European past there are many

examples of new histories being produced as part of emancipatory movements, such as those of the bourgeois in the 18th century, the labour movement in the 19th century and the feminist movement in this century. The point is that a concept of history has to be formulated, even if it was absent or not relevant to the culture of the group, in order to regain 'ownership' of a past defined by others. In opposition to the dominant version of the past, history has to be 'created'.

> Papua New Guineans must unite to create their own history.
>
> Papua New Guineans must speak to establish their own history.
>
> Papua New Guineans must write to establish their own history.
>
> Papua New Guineans must dare to create to make their own history (1980:27).

In this quotation Narokobi elegantly combines both terms of the opposition: history and creation. It is important to note that he rarely uses another term which explicitly establishes a link with the past, namely 'tradition'.[9] This is especially surprising because in most of the literature on the emergence of new identities in the South Pacific, tradition is considered a key symbol. In Narokobi's writings this clearly is not the case. The term that is central to him is the one used in the label itself: Melanesian *Way*. With the word 'way' or 'ways' he refers to something that is characteristic of a group of people: a particular 'way of doing things'.

> The Melanesian cosmic vision of life which is—and I still hold this view-a thought process, a way of doing things, a way of going about life, belief systems and so on…practices (int).

This notion, which I believe is rooted in indigenous concepts,[10] encompasses both change and continuity, creativity and tradition. As a result it has more affinity with the anthropological concept of culture than with that of tradition, provided that the concept of culture is not reified, as is often the case. With the Melanesian Way, Narokobi has coined a flexible concept whose primary

function is to articulate a distinct identity. Similarly, the anthropological concept of culture established itself fully within the academic enterprise when it came to be used for describing and explaining differences between societies.[11] For Narokobi the expression of difference is the essence of his conception of a Melanesian Way and—just as in the anthropological doctrine of culture relativism—this does not entail a value judgement about other 'ways of doing things'.

> What I am saying is that I am trying to make a song; I am trying to make a dance that I know best. And when I make this dance, I am not saying that your dance is no good. I am not saying that the Engan dance is no good. I am merely expressing myself in an Arapesh dance and it is your job to express yourself in your dance and together we create something. They are not the same, they are different And so I say that, when I emphasize or speak about Melanesian identity, Melanesian character, Melanesian personality, I am not saying that another is wrong or no good; I am not saying that at all. I am merely trying to colour the picture, make a picture out of the colours that I have (int).

Another aspect of the Melanesian Way as defined by Narokobi underscores its affinity to the anthropological concept of culture; I mean its holistic aspirations. According to Narokobi the Melanesian Way refers to a total way of life, encompassing many aspects of social life that are often separated into different domains in Western society. Similarly, the concept of culture was originally developed to denote the totality of the customs of a particular group. Narokobi puts it this way:

> From our spirituality, we had a communal vision of the cosmos. Our vision was and still is not an artificially dichotomized and compartmentalized pragmatism of the secular society. Ours is a vision of totality, a vision of cosmic harmony (1980:15).

This kind of description clearly brings the message across of an encompassing phenomenon. At the same time it allows this

phenomenon to remain rather vague and elusive. Its contours and colours—to use Narokobi's own words—are barely visible. In some places, however, Narokobi's vision assumes more concreteness. I briefly present three topics which receive ample attention in Narokobi's writings and which may be considered emblems of the Melanesian Way, namely the village, the betel nut and silence. These motifs provide some substance to the generalized notion of a Melanesian way of doing things.

EMBLEMS OF THE MELANESIAN WAY

The term 'village' occurs frequently in Narokobi's texts (more frequently for example than the word 'nation', although the latter is central to some of his arguments). The village is the physical and social setting in which a large part of Melanesian social life takes place. In Narokobi's view it continues to be the cornerstone of Melanesian society even though modern political and economic institutions often do not acknowledge its proper place.[12]

> The village or line remains the most ancient social, political, economic and spiritual unit. Without modern political support, the village continues to survive as the foundation of life in Papua New Guinea (1980:85).

The village is also the basis of knowledge of the Melanesian Way and the unit in which meaningful interaction takes place.[13]

> I have just returned from the University of Melanesia. That university is the village (1983b:53).

A large section on the use of betel nut begins as follows.

> TAKE ANOTHER BITE OF THE BETEL NUT,
> It's a

- Stimulant
- Mouth cleaner
- Body cooler
- Currency item
- Sacred plant

- Spirit chaser
- Bringer of male children
- Friendship maker

All these and more…
(1980:79).

With an unmistakable sense of humour he discusses first the positive uses of the stimulant and then some of its problems, for example that it makes unremovable stains on a white collar. He concludes that it is typically Melanesian and that it should be encouraged—albeit in a proper way—rather than prohibited.

> However, betel nut, for all its negative aspects, is an integral part of Melanesian culture. Betel nut stimulates, it intoxicates and excites. Or, it makes one nervous, giddy and sweaty. It depends on the type of betel nut chewed. Many visitors to PNG find betel nut chewing a bad habit. But is it any worse than eating sweets, drinking alcohol, tea, coffee, smoking or indulging in other cultural practices (1980:81)?

Finally, when writing about silence, Narokobi produces some of the most poetic parts of *The Melanesian Way* volume. In silence people become aware of the world around them. In silence people accept their own limitations. In silence life's secrets may be revealed to the individual. I conclude this section by letting Narokobi speak for himself.

> If we, as a modern people, are going to be ourselves, we will have to apply in a creative and a dynamic way our own ways of doing things. One of our greatest pearls of wisdom, is that of silence and quiet reflection, which can help us avoid confrontations of the worst kind based on religious dogma, economic ideology or political tragedy.
>
> At least, with decisions taken after reflection, one can say that he or she has subjected her being to the hidden power of silence, is blessed by the life of our living ancestors and the individual, and is more able to accept the decision whatever the outcome. That speech is silvern and silence is golden might be the proverbial treasure of the West, but it is the

> living reality of all our people; only that speech brings pigs and feasts, but silence reveals life's secrets (1980:68–69).[14]

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is strongly established in Papua New Guinea and is, therefore, an important discourse for formulating collective identities and a potential breeding ground for national imaginings (see Chapters Four and Five). Narokobi makes this very point when he refers to the preamble of the constitution of Papua New Guinea in which both tradition and Christianity are evoked.

> There are those who are so ill-informed, simplistic and narrow minded as to believe Melanesians have the choice between the so-called 'primitive' past of our ancestors and the 'civilized and enlightened' present of Western civilization.
>
> The choice is in fact more complex than this.
>
> The secret to that choice lies in the dual pillars of our Constitution. These pillars are our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now, enhanced by selected technology (1980:35).

In this quotation Narokobi brings together tradition, Christianity and modernity as the components of a Melanesian identity. So far I have not dealt with Narokobi's ideas about Christianity, as they are relatively submerged in the analysed texts. There are, however, other places where Narokobi, a professed Catholic, describes his attitude towards Christianity in detail (1985a, 1985b, see also 1980, Ch. 11). Starting from the assumption that Melanesians did not differentiate between religious and non-religious experience (1985b:70)—the Melanesian Way is described as a 'total cosmic vision of life'—he nevertheless acknowledges that Christianity can provide an extension of Melanesian values. In order to achieve this, the churches, which have thus far divided rather than united the Melanesian people, have to accept and build on the specific character of the Melanesian experience: 'We are Melanesians and it must be on our Melanesian values that Christianity can flourish' (1980:233). Narokobi's treatment of the Christian influence reveals the same kind of dialectic which I have described above

regarding the relation between tradition and modernity. The opposites may conflict but also go together in a new, encompassing way.

THE MELANESIAN WAY AND THE NATION

Thus far I have examined some central features of Narokobi's texts; in particular I focused on their emancipatory character, the dialectical way of reasoning, and on the meanings of their central concept: the Melanesian Way. In this section I turn to the question of the political referents of this concept. How is this constructed identity related to other political concepts, particularly that of the nation? A concept like that of the nation only makes sense if there is a political agenda involved, for example in favour of or against a particular state. How does this apply to Narokobi's ideas about the Melanesian Way? Is it possible to identify concrete interest groups to which this identity appeals, and particular political contexts in which it is used? As in the preceding sections I mainly concentrate on clues that are found in the texts themselves.

In his writings Narokobi attacks the colonizers for imposing artificial divisions. The heading of one of his articles reads: 'Europeans came and divided us' (1980:41). The fierce tone of this particular article may be partly due to the political issues which were current at the time. Sentiments of Papuan separatism were running high and Narokobi feared a disintegration of the newly formed independent state. He put the blame on the colonial government.

> It is really the colonial administrations which created the idea of Papua as a separate nation from New Guinea (1980:41).

The Australians had failed administratively to integrate the two territories and had not attempted to foster a 'Papua New Guinean consciousness'. Therefore they are partly responsible for postindependence divisiveness.[15]

Clearly political independence did not reflect an actual internal unity. However, Narokobi claims that there was some kind of Melanesian integration in place long before colonizers appeared on

the horizon. This effective unity was the result of trade between basically autonomous communities, which were on an equal technological level (1980:39).

> Melanesians of PNG, West Irian, the Solomon Islands and Torres Strait Islands, New Hebrides, New Caledonia and Fiji had been living and working through unity long before they encountered Europeans and Asians. […] This happened mostly through trade (1980:37).

In view of Anderson's thesis (1991:170ff) it is interesting that Narokobi also uses the image of the map to underscore an already existing unity, thereby pointing to the many shared boundaries between provinces (1980:38). Nevertheless, Narokobi realizes that it is still a long way to go from clan or community consciousness to a sense of national awareness and purpose (1983b:69,71). He explains that the achievement of independence was so fast and easy that a national consciousness could not develop except among a small elite.

> Because independence was hurried it is arguable that the level of awareness and motivation is not as high as it could be. A sense of national purpose, national ethic or national morality was not present at the time of independence except among a few politicians and civil servants (1980:75).

Elsewhere (1983b:71) Narokobi specifically refers to the absence of a sustained colonial struggle, which he sees as the ideal breeding ground for national identities.[16] As a result the independent state of Papua New Guinea was largely a colonial product appropriated by an indigenous elite as their own project

> Independence is a case of few Papua New Guineans imposing their will, through legitimate and democratic institutions upon the majority of the people, who did not know what independence was and did not even want it at the time. It is also a case of the metropolitan power being more than willing at the right time to relinquish its powers to the local authorities (1980:75).

Nation building is therefore a political aim of highest priority. This involves the construction of a new kind of shared identity which transcends existing linguistic and ethnic divisions.[17]

> We must build a nation in which tribal languages and cultural boundaries are transcended, not for exploitation of one group by another but for mutual support of each other. We must build a nation where a Motuan can stand on Tolai soil and believe he belongs to our mother earth, where a Simbu in West New Britain believes he is home among friends, where a Kerema in Lae can walk proudly and believe he belongs to this great nation. From Samarai to Wutung, from Buin to Daru, we must build a free and united nation. Beyond this, we must build Melanesian solidarity among our scattered island nations (1980:78).

Of particular interest in this text fragment is that Narokobi immediately moves from national unity to Melanesian solidarity, as if these two concepts are closely connected. Throughout his writings there is a tension between nationalist statements and the construction of a supranational Melanesian Way. If the frequency of word use in the analysed texts is a valid indication, Narokobi apparently privileges the words Melanesian (s) and Melanesia over the terms Papua New Guinean(s) and Papua New Guinea (or PNG).[18] In the interview I therefore asked him whether Papua New Guinea as an independent state needed its own concept of national identity as expressed by the term 'Papua New Guinean Way'. His answer was negative. He saw the Melanesian Way as the relevant concept which comprised the variations of the common identity as developed by different Melanesian countries and groups:[19]

> I do not think so because I think we are part of this region and we might have our own ways but I think we are part of this Melanesian group. We have some very clearly defined unique features, but certainly each country has varying aspects of this Melanesian identity, Melanesian concept (int.).

In some places Narokobi extends the idea of supranational solidarity even to the whole Pacific as in the following quote: 'We must build up true solidarity with the Pacific peoples and Pacific nations' (1980:76). However, he does not use the concept of a Pacific Way which has also gained some currency; for Narokobi the key concept remains that of a Melanesian Way. In order to answer the question posed at the beginning of this section concerning the political referents of this concept, it is useful to reflect on the character of this constructed identity in comparison to that of the nation.

The Melanesian Way is clearly not tied to a particular-real or imagined—state-organization and therefore it cannot reflect the identity of a citizen as a member of such a state. Unlike some nationalist identities, the Melanesian Way is not rooted in a shared language or in a common ethnicity. Neither is the Melanesian identity tied to specific events which define a common history. Although Narokobi refers to a Melanesian history, this past remains largely undefined, unlike the named battles and treaties that articulate the self-conscious histories of many nation-states. As argued in the previous section, the commonality of a Melanesian identity is to be found in an assumed shared culture, which is both an existing reality and an open-ended project. The inclusiveness of this concept makes it suitable for ideological use in different political contexts.

In the first place it prepares the way for a political concept of citizenship. Narokobi clearly expresses the emancipatory purpose of the new identity. The awareness of a Melanesian Way has to install pride in people who have been subjected to colonial domination. The colonized subject needs to be freed from an internalized image of inferiority and should be transformed into a new, self-confident and creative person. Thus the Melanesian identity can be seen as a step towards the establishment of the concept of the citizen as a free individual in an independent nation-state.

Secondly, the concept of a Melanesian Way is also used to counter internal divisiveness such as the wish of Papuans to secede from the state of Papua New Guinea. In addition, it contains

strong criticism of the continuing substantive involvement of expatriates in the affairs of the country and a plea for indigenizing the state and the economy. Thus it supports political efforts to strengthen national unity and self-reliance,

Thirdly, the Melanesian Way as formulated by Narokobi explicitly transcends the idea of a national identity to encompass a supranational, regional identity. Thus the political referent is extended to include neighbouring nation-states as well as minority groups. It may then be used to give a legitimate basis to intergovernmental co-operation such as in the Melanesian Spearhead Group or to render support to opposition movements such as the OPM in Irian Jaya, Indonesia, and the Kanak FLNKS in New Caledonia.

The concept of the Melanesian Way, therefore, has different political implications in different contexts. Although it is not conceived as a national identity, it may be used to support the process of nation building. At the same time it refers to wider regional connections and may thus play a role in the establishment of supranational organizations.

CONCLUSION

When political independence became a reality for Papua New Guinea in 1975—more swiftly than many had expected—the political elite had to confront a certain paradox. The new state was undeniably a product of colonial history but this history had not provided any ready symbols for constructing a national identity. A sustained anti-colonial struggle, which could have generated and solidified nationalist sentiments, had not occurred. This is not to say that there were no anti-colonial feelings. Particularly among the educated elite there had been a growing resentment against the dependency and inequality of the colonial situation. Narokobi was one of the authors who realized the potential of such anti-colonial sentiments for creating a shared identity. In his articles he reiterated the negative aspects of the common colonial experience and he enhanced the rhetorical effect of his statements by putting them in a 'we-they' framework. Writing after political independence Narokobi mobilized not only

past experiences; he also emphasized continuing Western dominance in Papua New Guinea, particularly at economic and ideological levels. He wanted to liberate his fellow Melanesians from their negative, colonial self-image by providing them with a new intellectual space to reflect on their own worth: a new identity.

The need for a new reflective space clearly developed in an oppositional context. For this very reason it was crucial for Narokobi and others to ground the new identity outside of the colonial experience. To counter the determining force of colonial history the new Melanesian identity was founded on tradition, the 'age-old' cultural heritage which long predated the arrival of the first Westerners. This is a solution which has been adopted by countless anti-colonial movements around the world, using the evocation of a precolonial past to assert a new self-confidence and independence. Although tradition is thus instrumental in effecting such a sense of psychological liberation, the Melanesian Way as formulated by Narokobi should not be regarded as a traditionalist ideology (see Chapter One). As I have shown, Narokobi tries to integrate indigenous and Western values. He does not automatically give preference to traditional concepts and institutions. Central to his thinking is a critical assessment of the old and the new; he wants to be able to grasp the opportunities of modern society without losing his cultural 'roots'. The Melanesian Way is therefore not the celebration of tradition: it is an attitude which combines respect for the past with openness for change. The key word is 'way' (which I glossed as 'culture'), not 'tradition'.

The new Melanesian identity was rooted in a paradox: the modern project of national independence necessitated the formulation of a common cultural heritage. In my analysis I have shown that the Melanesian Way incorporates a number of contradictions; it is new and old at the same time; it is created and received; it is pluralistic and has a common base; it is undefinable but consists of concrete practices; it contains Western and indigenous values; it embraces modern technology and maintains an ecological spirituality; it is a group identity but formulated by a few individuals. Narokobi is well aware of the contradictory character of his intellectual creation but he does not see this as a

problem. His strength, as I have tried to demonstrate, lies in his particular mode of reasoning. He tries to encompass and unite the opposites, even though this is only possible with compromises on both sides. This dialectical approach makes the new identity inherently flexible and adaptable to different circumstances.

Developed in opposition to a dominant Western presence the Melanesian Way is not primarily conceived as a national identity. It refers to a wider region, which—it should be noted—also has its origin as a named entity in the colonial period. In its regional appeal the Melanesian Way resembles the *Négritude* movement of the 1930s, '40s and '50s with which it shares more similarities (cf. Hymans 1971, Wauthier 1964), *Négritude* was also an oppositional movement aiming at political and psychological emancipation from Western dominance. It contained many of the same themes: an emphasis on the indigenous past and cultural heritage, a focus on spirituality, respect for nature and a holistic attitude to life. The concept of *Négritude* originated among African and Caribbean writers who were living in Paris at the time, the colonial and cultural metropolis. Although there was not such a single colonial centre in the case of Melanesia, Narokobi and many of his compatriots received their higher education outside of the country, mainly at universities in Australia. This temporary exile during which they were bound to meet English-speaking students from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and even Irian Jaya, facilitated the imagination of a supra-national, regional identity.

The Melanesian Way is clearly not a national narrative in the strict sense but it has performed a role within the context of nation building. It has contributed to the self-awareness of the new citizens and has been used as an argument against secessionist movements. It may be, however, that its comprehensiveness is not only its strength but also its weakness. An identity that is so broad may be insufficiently focused to meet the requirements of new political developments—as happened with the concept of *Négritude,* which lost its appeal when most African countries had gained independence. During the campaign for the 1992 national election, newspaper articles covering the event revealed the

following key issues: development, national unity and citizenship. Tradition was still an important issue but references to the Melanesian Way occurred only a few times. In these cases the opposition to foreign influence was the main connotation of the term, not Narokobi's vision of an amalgamated culture.[20] There are clear signs that a new, modernist discourse on citizenship and the nation is gaining ground at the expense of the more inclusive notion of a Melanesian Way.[21] The latter may maintain a function though in the context of supranational co-operation such as is formalized in the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

NOTES

The research for this chapter has been made possible through financial support from the Australian Research Council and the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO). The following people have been instrumental in the analysis of Narokobi's texts by preparing the material for computer analysis: Ria van de Zandt, Maria Lane, Ricky Breedveld and Marlies Berbers. I am grateful for their assistance. Furthermore, I would like to thank Debbi Long, Anton Ploeg and Nicholas Thomas for their helpful comments as well as the participants in a workshop on nationalism in Canberra and the participants in a seminar in Nijmegen for stimulating questions. Of course I am particularly indebted to Bernard Narokobi whose ideas are the focus of this chapter and who kindly agreed to an interview while he was extremely busy in the aftermath of the 1992 national election.

1. A 1972 policy statement by the pro-independence political party Pangu Pati reads: 'When Papua Niuginians are running the government, they will understand our problems. While Australia is running our government, it is trying to solve our problems in an Australian fashion, This is not always good for our people. But when Papua Niuginians are our leaders, they will develop our country in a Papua Niuginian fashion.' (Jinks, Biskup, and Nelson 1973:428).
2. The computer programme Kwalitan (cf Weizman & Miles 1995) greatly facilitated my analysis of the first 16 articles from *The Melanesian Way* (pages 13–86) as well as the interview by providing

quick word counts, but especially by allowing me to easily draw together and compare relevant text fragments. Through a process of assigning key words, comparison and reflection I identified the central themes and style elements of the selected texts.

3. In his *Post Courier* column Narokobi (1980:63) emphasized that the colonial tidal wave did not only destroy local cultures but that it also set the conditions for the creation of new ones: 'Melanesia has been invaded by a huge tidal wave from the West in the form of colonization and Christianization. Like any tidal wave, the West came mercilessly, with all the force and power, toppling over our earth, destroying our treasures, depositing some rich soil, but also leaving behind much rubbish. This Western tidal wave has also set in motion chain reactions within ourselves and a thirst for a better future. Western influence has a negative and destructive aspect. Melanesian Voice also sees it as a wave that has helped to set free our creative forces. It is a wave whose moving ripples should be used as a living light for a new future.'
4. Compare also the following passage in which Narokobi stresses how Melanesians have learned to see and judge themselves through the eyes of others: 'Over the centuries, Melanesians have come to see themselves as they are understood and written up by foreigners. Melanesians are walking in the shadows of their Western thinkers and analysts. Melanesians are living under dreams and visions, dreamt and seen by Westerners. Melanesians are walking under the silhouettes of foreign outlooks' (1980:18).
5. See also Narokobi (1983b:105). Discussing the fifth national goal concerning 'Papua New Guinean Ways', he wrote: 'What is recognized here is a significant need to be mentally decolonized. It is not enough for decolonization to take place in a purely legal and physical sense. There must be a change of heart and mind'
6. 'With the benefit of the written word, I believe we must without delay, establish our own authentic philosophy, our authentic doctrines, theologies, jurisprudence, sociology, psychology, medicine, education, politics, economics, architecture and so on'(1980:21).
7. In Narokobi (1983b:105) he argues the unity in the following way: 'The fundamental unity of Melanesians in PNG, for example, is rooted in a traditional non-literate, wood and stone, largely agricultural civilization centred around the family, the clan, the village or the tribe, usually from a common ancestor.'
8. Compare also the following telling quote which connects the concept of dignity with the aim of emancipation while emphasising that using the past in this way does not mean to be bound by it: 'Accordingly, sinking our vision in the past is not to be rooted in a

dead and immobile past. To sink our roots in our past is to restore to ourselves our rightful dignity denied us by many whose purpose in Melanesia is to deny us our very existence as human beings' (1980:15).

9. It appears only four times in the analysed texts. The terms 'custom (s)' and 'customary' equally occur only a few times (each three times).
10. Compare for example the word *kaye* used among Titan speakers in Manus (Schwartz 1975:122), the word *dewa* used on Goodenough (Young 1971:60), the word *nurunan* in the Baluan language (Otto 1992a: 270), and possibly also the word *saki* in Narokobi's own Arapesh language; in Narokobi (1989:59) he uses the English gloss 'tradition' but then shows that it means more than this.
11. As distinct from the reconstruction of the developmental stages of human civilization.
12. He develops this argument in Narokobi (1980:85). It may be true that local government councils sometimes disregarded village units, but this was certainly not always the case. The newer system of community government tries to follow more closely existing village divisions. The fifth national goal (concerning Papua New Guinean Ways) in the preamble to the National Constitution calls explicitly for support for the village under its item four: '[We accordingly call for] traditional villages and communities to remain as viable units of Papua New Guinean society, and for active steps to be taken to improve their cultural, economic and ethical quality.'
13. Compare: The Melanesian village must be maintained as a basic social unit from which individuals will find meaning' (1983b:28).
14. In the following he summarizes these 'secrets': 'What then are the secrets of silence? It is clear to me that in Melanesia, an act of self-surrender is the first step to take. The person as if it were, lays himself bare and open to the living forces surrounding the person. Following self-surrender goes self-control and discipline. A spirit of sacrifice is important. The person is purified, "perfected"—even for a moment. Suffering and pain are often endured more willingly. Consensus and compromise are more possible. We are more willing to admit wrong and better prepared to reconcile. Deep concern for the individual emerges, and caring and sharing in our communities are promoted. Silence prepares us to accept defeat' (1980:67).
15. Narokobi uses powerful language: 'The joint administration of Papua and New Guinea after the Pacific War gave our people a sense of political unity. But the unimaginative happy-go-lucky Australians never took any active steps to develop Papua New Guinean consciousness. Each Territory had its own constitution. Even when they joined them under one Act, the two territories—one

a Trust Territory and one a Crown possession—were never legally fused. Their political entities remained distinct even up to Independence day in 1975. Australians therefore are partly responsible for the divisive politics that are being conducted today' (1980:42).

16. 'In many countries nationalism is preceded by a long and sustained struggle. The ease with which political power was transferred to Melanesian leaders via Anglo-Australian legal, political and economic institutions has given us no chance to master national consciousness' (1983b:71).
17. In the interview Narokobi expresses this point even more strongly: 'By nature Melanesians are a fragmented people. The maintenance of a nation-state has to grow up from this fragmented situation. We do not have a loaf of bread, we have to create it'
18. He uses the words Melanesian(s) and Melanesia 260 times, and the words Papua New Guinean(s) and Papua New Guinea (or PNG) 149 times in total.
19. In the following quote he even appears to depoliticize the political concept of the Melanesian Way by refusing to link it to identifiable political groups: 'The Melanesian cosmic vision of life transcends political boundaries. It is not confined to nation-states. It is a cultural and a spiritual existence. Hence I say that the non-independent communities of Melanesia, like communities in West Papua and communities in New Caledonia which are not independent, they are still part of this whole chain and that is why you can't speak of Melanesian Way finding itself in a political party or in a political forum. Rather it exists in people irrespective of political boundaries' (int. 2/7/92).
20. These conclusions are based on an investigation of 375 articles from the *Post-Courier*, *The Times of Papua New Guinea* and *Wantok*, which appeared during the campaign for the 1992 national election.
21. An example of this new discourse is taken from a speech by former Manus Premier Stephen Pokawin to high school (grade 12) graduates: 'Papua New Guinea yearns for a new generation of citizens. Citizens who would say no to selfishness and irresponsibility and yes to productive contribution to the development of the country with responsibility to the new and future generations' (*The Times of Papua New Guinea*, 11 November 1993).

CHAPTER THREE
Imagining the State, or Tribalism and the Arts of Memory in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea

Jeffrey Clark

The Czech novelist Milan Kundera suggests that in the context of the Soviet control of formerly independent European nation-states, 'the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting/ This struggle is crucial for the replicants created by the future capitalist state in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* who, as commodities become human, are afraid that their memories, the traces of their individuality, will disappear like 'tears in the rain'. Kundera mentions in particular the 'organized forgetting' arranged by the socialist state to create a wider unity under communism, through which a people and individuals lose contact with their national consciousness and sense of belonging. It appears, then, that nations can be forgotten, although they are recast through a new kind of remembering engineered by education, propaganda, secrecy and fear, and public ceremonial. This argument assumes the prior existence of the nation, raising the question of how memories of the nation first come into being. Can this question be answered, or even posed, for the decidedly non-European state of Papua New Guinea, with its manifold languages, cultures, and histories, formerly under Australian colonial control but independent since 1975? What sorts of conditions need to be in existence for the emergence of a Papua New Guinean nationalism, and does this suggest that the state must engage in acts of 'organized remembering' such as Independence Day celebrations? More to the point, what does the state require 'tribal' peoples to forget or consciously elide in order to create the nation?

The answers to these questions have implications for the anthropology which has been practised in Papua New Guinea,

particularly in the Highlands (an area not renowned in the anthropological search for memories). The traditional focus of much of this anthropology has been the localized, kinship-based community embedded within, and dependent upon, an areal network of similar communities. While the discipline has reoriented its objectives and methods to remain relevant in the postcolonial and postprimitive world, ethnographies of the Papua New Guinea Highlands, perhaps because of its reputation as the last 'laboratory' for research into 'pristine' tribal societies, have until recently concentrated on aspects of the local and 'traditional'- the Holy Grail of theory awaited testing by the pure knights of the High Valleys (see Lawrence 1988; Smith 1980; Barnes in Glasse 1968:3; Hayes 1992:35). While a great deal of useful research continues to be done at the community level, it is time for Highlands anthropology to increasingly situate its local investigations in the wider regional and political framework of the post-independence state (see, for example, Gordon and Meggitt 1985). The following discussion is a step in this direction, and is based on ongoing research into perceptions of the state and the extent of nationalistic sentiment in the Southern Highlands Province.

The tone of the article is impressionistic and its content and perspective jumps from the local to the regional, from one region to another, from the individual to the group, and from anecdote to generalization. This shifting approach best captures the situation of peoples caught up in transitions to 'modernity', although the experience of many Highlanders with colonialism and independence could perhaps be described as 'postmodern' in the sense that heterogeneity and fragmentation, not holism and progress, define its characteristics (see Clark n.d.). My conclusion is that, in the rural Highlands areas where fieldwork was undertaken, there is little if any concept of the nation. However, notions of the state, which is experienced through its institutions, certainly exist. Central to my argument is that before (or if) rural Southern Highlanders can begin to imagine the nation, the state *also* has to be imagined, and memories of it have to be created and sustained. The approach adopted is to try to grasp how people

think about the state by considering the narratives and idioms which relate to it, creating the memories out of which, perhaps, the imaginative space for a nation will emerge.

It could be suggested that, prior to colonialism, Highlands people experienced what Biersack (1990) describes as two 'horizons of agency', the domestic and public, which governed corporeal and corporate life. The domestic horizon of household production and consumption reproduced bodies, whereas the public horizon of exchange, ritual, and warfare organized bodies into larger units. These horizons synergistically interacted to create local histories and support concepts of moral regulation, self, personhood, and the group. What I want to consider in this article is how a new horizon of agency has been created by the incorporation of the domestic and public into the time and space of the colonial and post-independence state. Christianity, plantation labour, the police as combatants in 'tribal' warfare, all extend the boundaries of the public horizon, just as store-bought commodities for household consumption intrude into the domestic. The space of the state, where people experience being between the 'tribe' and institutional forms of order and control, is liminal and ambiguous. It is out of this experience of liminality that new forms of identity are creatively generated.

Incorporation by the state allows for the transformation of consciousness, in conjunction with the way in which organizational forms of the state are imposed on the group and the person. Clan territories often became or were forced into census areas, with a lack of fit between local and administrative definitions of the 'group' creating new bounded entities and providing one basis for later perceptions of the state. Census areas make up an administrative district (often with some cultural or linguistic basis), which together comprise the province, a decentralized administrative and political unit. The nineteen provinces form the state of Papua New Guinea, with its parliament and parent public service departments located in the national capital of Port Moresby. For the Southern Highlander, then, there are potentially new levels of supra-local membership. Leaving aside the complicating issues of religious and political party affiliation, and

electoral boundaries which may include parts or wholes of several districts, a person can now be identified as a member of, for instance, Koliri (clan), Takuru (census unit), Pangia (district), Southern Highlands (province), Papua New Guinea (state). In some situations it seems that straightforward declarations of membership are transcended and a sense of Melanesian ethnicity, a prerequisite for Melanesian nationalism, emerges.

The question becomes, how are these new levels of membership in state-space imagined by people formerly characterized as 'tribal'? If kinship, locality, and the shared consumption and production of locally produced food were the determinants of 'traditional' group membership (Strathern 1973), in conjunction with the activities of big men around whom groups of supporters coalesced, then what sorts of factors are now operating to define membership in, for example, Papua New Guinea? Since pacification, to repeat a point made above, the engagement by Highlanders in such things as Christianity and development has transformed notions of the self, group, and personhood,[1] Granted that there was no modernistic project of nation-building in the Highlands, at least by the colonial state, it remains a logical next step to consider how events such as self-government and independence have influenced the way people think about themselves and about 'belonging' to units other than the household, hamlet, village and clan. While this is not a concern of the present article, how does the consumption of tinned fish and rice, products which at a gustatory level unite Papua New Guinea, affect the awareness of others engaged in similar consuming passions (cf. Hirsch 1990)?

My interpretation of this process of rethinking membership is influenced by the work of Benedict Anderson (1991). He argues that nationalism involves a radical transformation of consciousness, particularly since the invention of printing and the commodification of its products, and is dependent on the existence of an 'imagined community', which refers to the fact of people being aware of the existence of similar people, living in similar conditions and sharing similar world views, regardless of the fact that in all likelihood those 'others' in the imagined community will

never be encountered. Anderson's most famous example of this type of imagination is of a person sitting on a train going to work, reading a newspaper, and being able to imagine countless others reading the same newspapers on their way to work, and interpreting the information and news in much the same sort of way. For Anderson, this type of imagination—of a community whose members you will never meet—is coterminous with and necessary for the experience of nationalism.

Part of this imagination, the creation and sustenance of memories, rests upon a shared sense of time and space. People who perceive others as belonging to the nation do so upon the basis of their inhabiting a similar time, built around a shared history, and space, constructed around an experience of place which derives its meaning from the assumption that others understand this experience similarly. For example, Anzac Day, which is part of every Australian's history, part of the meaning of being 'Australian', is the national ceremonial occasion for Australia, founded on a common awareness of events at Gallipoli, and knowledge that others all over Australia are also conducting Anzac celebrations and derive the same sorts of meanings from them (cf. Kapferer 1988). Anzac Day is a 'national imagining' (Anderson 1983:17), a celebration of discontinuity with the past disguised through memories of a mythic continuity. The timelessness of the Australian nation is imagined through the time-depth of Aboriginal pre-history—the nation 'loom[s] out of an immemorial past' (ibid.:11).

A problem with this analysis is that it is a 'modern' reading of nationalism; not that a postmodern perspective would suggest that a nationalistic sentiment is no longer evident or important (it clearly is; witness, at the time of writing, the 'We are Australian' advertising propaganda on television screens in multicultural Australia). As Habermas notes, modernism is 'dominant but dead' (quoted in Foster 1985:ix); the nation remains significant but its meanings are contested. Anzac Day can sometimes inspire resistance as much as allegiance to (some aspects of) the nation. Below, I consider interpretations of Independence Day in Papua New Guinea, as well as other possible markers of the nation-state,

and it is useful to point out here that a range of meanings attach to the concept of 'Papua New Guinea', and that differences exist between a sense of being Papua New Guinean and a nationalistic/Melanesian sentiment.

Modern nationalisms are often based on a significant historical event and relate to death, usually on a massive scale and celebrated on occasions such as Remembrance Day, such that the nation is seen to rise from the death and sacrifice of its 'sons'. Nationalisms are relatively recent historical phenomena, related to developments in the evolution of state forms, such as the transition from monarchic to bureaucratic control, changes in forms of military organization, and industrialization and urban build-up. Another question which can be posed is, do Papua New Guineans experience a similar time and space necessary for the emergence of nationalistic passions? Papua New Guinea has a different culture (s) and history(ies) to the European states which developed nationalism, and explanations of nationalism focusing on the European situation may have a limited use in Papua New Guinea where the 'tribe' continues to provide the major form of socio-political organization, and where experiences of industrialization, a common history, urbanization, and shared conflagration, do not apply—at least until recently (for example, the popular awareness of the Bougainville crisis) and not to every Papua New Guinean. Colonialism, like print-capitalism, undoubtedly affected people's consciousness, but the experience of colonialism was not everywhere the same, even for neighboring peoples, and its effects were not universal. What could appear in Papua New Guinea are postmodern nationalisms which are local and regional in terms of ethnicity and membership, and these would be phenomena of a totally different kind to the nations which emerged in Europe and the New World.

Peter Lawrence once jokingly remarked to a colleague that Papua New Guinea is going through the equivalent of 2000 years of European history in less than 200 years, his major reference being to coastal and island sites. If this Eurocentric notion of an 'accelerated' history is retained for a while, then how much more accelerated is Highlands history where the time span since

pacification is in many areas less than fifty years? Lawrence meant that many European phenomena which predate nationalism also seem to occur in Papua New Guinea. For example, the millennial movements of medieval times which often accompanied the Crusades (associated with beliefs in such things as the second coming of Christ, or the resurrection of Emperor Frederick II), appear as cargo cults in Melanesia, or even as Christian revival activity associated with the impending end of the world. Phenomena such as banditry and proto-Mafia groups, associated with developing forms of capitalism in rural areas (Blok 1974), appear as rascalry and criminal groups (Reay 1980; Gordon and Meggitt 1985:189). 'Adventure capitalism' preceded the more modern forms discussed by Weber (1958), and an argument could be made that the dependence of the Papua New Guinea economy on logging, gold, oil, and gas, and their exploitation by entrepreneurial politicians, has more in common with these earlier forms of European capitalism than with its later, more 'rational' appearance (cf. Amarshi et al. 1979:vi-viii). Is there a possibility that the nation could emerge as a product of changes accelerated through the colonial cyclotron? Such comparative evolutionism is not, of course, meant to be taken literally as it assumes a Western historical notion of linear development over time, and Highlanders have different concepts of what constitutes history. But it remains a useful heuristic device for thinking about some of the issues raised in this chapter.

With a prenationalistic Europe, contemporary Papua New Guinea seems to share elements of a Gothic world view, that is, a world based on the Bible and its laws, morality and millennial prophecies—at least this is my experience based upon fieldwork with Wiru and Huli people, from Pangia and Tari districts respectively in the Southern Highlands Province.[2] What makes Papua New Guinea different, of course, is that its members inhabit a universe in which computers, videos, Toyotas, and international flights are observable and available (if not to all!). If nationalism does exist in Papua New Guinea (and it probably does in some areas or at some times), then an explanation of its existence and creation will have to be Papua New Guinean and not European

centred. For Anderson (1991:36), the emergence of print-capitalism in Europe led to particular forms of consciousness and notions of the individual which presaged and helped form the nation. This situation did not pertain in Papua New Guinea, although the state's emphasis on literacy-along with attempts to dismantle the provincial system—may be a form of 'catch-up' nationalism to create a particular form of the individual receptive to the state's surveillance and control (cf. Foster 1992). The notion of a Papua New Guinea 'state' could be itself problematic, especially if its definition depends, in a Weberian sense, upon its monopoly of the means of legitimate violence (Schiltz 1987). It is the absence of this monopoly, particularly at its peripheries, which has contributed to the problems the 'state' is experiencing with 'tribal' warfare and rascalry. Papua New Guinea could be unsatisfactorily described as a 'weak' state, but a different language for describing state forms in Melanesia is clearly needed.

Nationalism has been discussed as a secular religion (Kapferer 1988:11). In other words, the largely illiterate world which people once experienced as Bible-centred, hierarchical and dynastic (Anderson 1991:7), has been replaced by the nation as the origin of community, morality and sentiments of membership. People are willing to die for the nation, in World War II or the Gulf War, but not for defending or spreading God's kingdom on earth, despite Reagan's apocalyptic pronouncements and Bush's rhetoric that sending U.S. troops to Somalia was doing 'God's work'. This is not to deny the importance of Christianity or Islam to the nation but to suggest, as Kapferer (1988:5) argues, that religion is harnessed to the aims of the nation, which is a different role to that played by religion in the Gothic state. If it is true that Highlands Papua New Guinea exhibits a world view I tentatively label as 'Melanesian Gothic', in which Christianity strongly figures (although not in any monolithic sense) in people's interpretations of past, present, and future events, then how can nationalism—which depends on the demolition of the 'sacred text' view of the world-exist in the Highlands? Or do issues of nationalism have to be rethought for countries such as Papua New Guinea which are often characterized as communal and egalitarian, and which do

not share a common history or, for that matter, a common experience of colonialism? I stress that my use of the notion of a Melanesian Gothic is not to import a Western historical model of how people experience the world, but to give a sense of the difference of this experience for Melanesians (and obviously there is an immense variability in this experience across the range of Melanesian societies; there are local and specific forms of this 'Gothic' view).

An election poster for a 1990 by-election in Southern Highlands Province proclaims that

> Government must provide a foundation (for youth) to advance and become patriotic, productive and God-fearing citizens… (and) to actively participate in nation-building.

Deputy Opposition leader Julius Chan had this to say about educational problems in Papua New Guinea and the need to employ foreign teachers 'we have to forget about nationalistic pride and ego trips'. A letter to the *Post-Courier,* Papua New Guinea's daily newspaper, states 'in 1992 [we should] really work to help our nation to become a better place in which to live'. Another, writing about constitutional review, suggests 'changing to a system of government relevant to the cultural and social heritage of this nation'. Clearly, among some citizens of Papua New Guinea, although predominantly literate and educated ones, there is a concept of the 'nation' as an entity people should strive to create and join. Yet when I pointed to an election poster in a rural Tari trade store proclaiming *Yu mas givim vot long nesen* (give your vote to the nation), none of the Huli men present knew what the pidgin term *nesen* (nation) meant. In places like Port Moresby, populated by people of different cultures and with differing educational backgrounds, living in Europeanstyle housing or shanty towns, a collective identity as Melanesians seems to be emerging. But is this nationalism? This is a difficult topic to investigate because nationalism is above all a sentiment. One has to wait to see it on specific occasions such as, for example, the South Pacific games, or responses to the Papua New Guinea army fighting in Bougainville. I could not attempt to answer this

question, so I will focus down and concentrate on the case for nationalism in Southern Highlands Province, with particular reference to Tari and Pangia districts. Using the Southern Highlands material I create a Melanesian 'everyman', who is only meant to serve polemical purposes. My conclusion, in short, is that among many people characterized as 'grass roots' notions of nationalism do not exist.[3] I will now suggest reasons in support of this assertion, all of which are interrelated.

1. Across all ages and genders there is often stated a desire for the return of Australia as a colonial power, related in part to perceptions of the colonial and pre-independence era as an arcadian age of peace and realizable dreams of prosperity. Many coastal peoples appeal to *kastam* in contemporary constructions of political and ethnic identity (see, for example, Otto 1992a), whereas Southern Highlanders often appeal for Australian *kiaps* to rule again, which is a different construction of the past as a resource for the present. A nationalistic sentiment hardly equates with a preference for the regimes of colonialism and a return to the past (a peculiarly Highlands version of the cinematic theme of 'Back to the Future').

2. There is a marked cynicism, bitterness and distrust towards the *gavman* (government), related to the machinations of the *wantok system,* a system about which Highlanders are ambivalent; it is seen as either extended kinship or cronyism at its worst (see Gordon and Meggitt 1985:157). It benefits people as *wantoks* (people from the same area, ethnic or language group) in some situations but there are more exclusive *wantok systems* which are seen to regulate employment opportunities and perpetuate favouritism and corruption among public servants and politicians. *Wantokism* is cited as the major reason for the breakdown of the state since independence in 1975. When I asked Kaiyape Wilson, my Pangia collaborator, what he thought of belonging to the state, he immediately replied 'I hate PNG' with a vehemence that surprised me, and confessed to feelings of shame about Papua New Guinea. He qualified his answer with reference to the ways in which government inefficiency, corruption, and *wantokism* in particular, hold back development. During an election rally in

Pangia I observed the derision with which campaign speeches were often received, and some people sat on election posters of candidate's faces as an obvious sign of their disapproval.

3. There is a strong element of self-condemnation in many people's attitudes about the situation of their post-independence districts. Rural Southern Highlanders, at least, often denigrate themselves—their schools, houses, aid posts, hospitals, standard of politicians, etcetera-in comparison to the ways in which Europeans ran things. While Anderson refers to the realist novel for insights into the narration of the nation (cf. Bhabha 1990:2), I will refer to articles and letters in the *Post-Courier,* Papua New Guinea's daily newspaper, for narration against the nation. A letter to the *Post-Courier* captures the flavour of this self-criticism, and is in reference to tribal fighting and drunken brawls:

> We live with the most advanced technology existing in the world today and we still practice such uncivilized methods of obtaining money and goods… Politicians are to blame for our sick society, so everyone says; but I never heard a politician telling us to loot stores, rape women, break into someone's house…

The images conjured up are those of barbarians in a modern and hi-tech world, and the message conveyed by this and other statements is that people are like children, not yet ready for the responsibilities of adulthood/civilization.

4. One argument for the emergence of nationalism is that people have to develop a highly positive regard for their history/heritage, which becomes an almost sacred thing. The Australian War Memorial, Westminster Cathedral, the Lincoln Memorial, these are all sites where this fetishization of history has a physical location. The nation must come to worship itself (Kapferer 1988: 5). The problem with this argument for the Southern Highlands is that this fetishization takes place around what people often call 'culture', but as part of a process initiated, not by state institutions or the media, but by many of the Christian missions, and to a lesser extent by the Australian colonial administration. Many aspects of Highlands culture have been fetishized as 'evil', or at

least as something to do with the unsophisticated and parochial *kanaka* (native).[4] An awareness of primitiveness is part of the self-condemnation discussed in 3) above (and see Clark 1992 on the role of the 'primitive' in colonial discourse).

5. There is no significant historical event to focus on as a symbol of origin. Australians have the Gallipoli landings and retreat, North Americans have the Pilgrim Fathers and the Revolutionary War. What about Papua New Guinea, doesn't it too have a date upon which independence was granted, and a day to celebrate annually since 1975? To this I would reply that Independence Day is not a nationalistic celebration, at least in the Southern Highlands. Independence in Tari and Pangia was either resisted or viewed as a return to the days of acting like 'wild pigs'. At Margarima patrol station, people chopped down the flagpole flying the new flag, mistakenly believing that this would curtail any plans for independence (Ben Probert, pers. comm. 1989),[5] while at Tari station fuel drums were rolled onto the airstrip to prevent an aeroplane carrying Michael Somare, the first Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and one of the key players in the independence movement, from landing (Peter Barber, pers. comm. 1987). Wiru viewed the prospect of independence with alarm and commenced again the manufacture of implements of war in anticipation of an imminent decline into chaos. To this day, the fact of independence continues to be resented by many Southern Highlanders, and the day itself is associated with the awarding of self-government and not with any sense or sentiments of a wider membership in an entity called Papua New Guinea. Independence Day in Pangia sometimes creates passions, but of protest against the state rather than identification with the nation. From Pangia station there is an unobstructed view up the Polu valley, and informants stated that on this day many people go to their gardens to burn off their rubbish, the resulting smoke being clearly visible to the administration in Pangia, and intended as a sign of disaffection with self-government and the general corruption of politicians and public servants.

If these reasons are granted some validity as generalizations, then they hardly provide the basis for the generation of

nationalistic sentiments, at least in terms of the model of European nationalism created by Anderson (1991). According to this model, before nationalism can emerge, a religious world view, based upon the notion of a sacred text, must first be replaced by the logocentric universe, in which order and morality are located in institutions and rules rather than in the mind of God. Let me present a last selection of letters to the editor from the *Post-Courier,* although I do not mean to suggest that a selection of letters based on random reading over a three month period conveys an allencompassing and representative Melanesian world view.

> [re: the need to keep employing expatriates] We excuse our failures by telling the world it is the Melanesian Way. This is rubbish. We are lazy, lack pride and discipline, and have no firm direction from our government… (with little) sense of national purpose.
>
> [re: fighting in Bougainville] Had the national government sought Godly advice to solve landowners demands, I believe there would be no problem at all… We are Melanesian, we feel Melanesian, we act Melanesian, and therefore, we should make peace in the Melanesian way, counting on God to help us.

These letters capture the difficulties involved in linking a national consciousness to the Melanesian Way. Does the reference to God indicate the ways in which the sacred text continues to help define Melanesian identity and inhibit nationalism (at least as Europeans understand it)? Is being Melanesian related to membership of Christianity and not Papua New Guinea? Clearly the connections between religion and nationalism are complex in the case of Papua New Guinea, and here I can only consider them suggestively rather than conclusively. When people were asked what made people members of Papua New Guinea, they found this a very difficult question (often asking me to reveal the answer to them), and usually answered in terms of skin colour, body shape, behavioural mannerisms (such as the way people walk, and not equated by informants with 'culture'), and sometimes, although rarely, *Tok*

Pisin (Papua New Guinea Pidgin) and Christianity; the last two are the only components of identity which are not physical. None of my informants ever suggested that a sense of Melanesian identity was a product of a shared culture or history. Finally, the commanding officer of the Papua New Guinea security forces in Bougainville had this to say in the *Post-Courier* about the government's chances of winning the conflict with the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), which practises 'black magic' to help its secessionist cause:

> the only way to solve the crisis on the island is through spiritual means…it was not through the 'barrel of a gun' but through the power of God, that a lasting solution would be found… [BRA rebels] have to surrender [their] spirits to God and accept [living] in peaceful harmony with [their] people and God.

It is very difficult to conceive of a West Point or Duntroon officer making a similar comment! They may make reference to the 'grace of God' before a military engagement, but a biblical world view is surely absent from their views on conflict management. To support a point made above, the 'peaceful harmony' refers less to the idea of the nation than to membership in an embracing Christian community.

I will elaborate on these statements with some suggestive remarks from my fieldwork. The Papua New Guinea flag is often called Somare's flag, which he received for getting rid of Europeans. It is not particularly thought of as a symbol of the nation. The following interpretation of the meaning of the flag comes from a group of young Pangia men. The flag is diagonally divided in half, and is red above, black below. The red half contains the bird of paradise, an emblem acknowledged everywhere as representing Papua New Guinea, and the black, lower half depicts the constellation of the Southern Cross, recognized as an emblem of Australia (it appears on the Australian flag). The red colour is held to represent Europeans (known as 'redmen' in Pangia), the black colour representing Papua New Guineans. It is quite clear that this is not a national flag but, for these men at least, an iconic representation of colonial history and

of the wish for Australia to continue to be part of Papua New Guinea, in other words of the necessity for an interdependence, for horizontal connections. Red/European contains the bird of paradise/Papua New Guinea; black/Papua New Guinean contains the Southern Cross/Australia. This I take as the expression of an ideal egalitarian encompassment, the desire for an equivalence in what is presently a hierarchical and one-sided relationship. The flag is a particular interpretation of history and a recognition that Papua New Guinea needs Australia to be self-sufficient.[6]

For Independence Day celebrations in Pangia people, as well as engaging in sporting events and 'singsings', continually act out episodes from the colonial past. These episodes refer particularly to events from the very early days of colonialism, such as encounters with the first police, first experiences with things like radio and tinned fish, the first census, and so on. One is reminded of Rosaldo's discussion of Ilongot history (Philippines), where he suggests that Ilongot construct their sense of history through narratives which are an endless repetition of place names connected up by people's movements:

> excursions into the past are meticulously mapped onto the landscape, not onto a calendar…an event placed in space is also intelligibly located in time (Rosaldo 1980:48).

The annually repeated acting out of events of first contact in Pangia is in some respects similar to Ilongot constructions of history. The dramatic creation of images of the past are the means by which Wiru play with understandings of the colonial era to make sense of the present, and perhaps future. There is also the possibility that these dramas are like ritual attempts to capture the past, to create again the memories of a golden age that many people would like to return. Like Scott's replicants, they want to be made real through the magical process of replication, if not of themselves but of a time (Taussig 1993:2). Why incidents of first contact, as opposed to other events of colonialism? In a sense, a return to first contact is a return to true beginnings, when all things were possible. To go back in time is to briefly recreate the colonial landscape (if 'long ago is far away' at a mundane level,

then 'long ago is right here' is ritually possible). People desire to embrace once more a colonial chronotope, to create a time and space where the future was still in front of them. Otherwise, people will remain suspended in an indigenous version of the 'infinite pause' in rural development (Howlett 1973:273). Pangia people have a sense of going backwards in time, to before Europeans arrived.

> Marilyn Strathern (1990:29) speaks to this when she writes that
>
> …time is not a line between happenings; it lies in the capacity of an image (such as that of first contact) to evoke past and future simultaneously… (and) space is not an area between points, it is the effectiveness of an image in making the observer think of both here and there, of oneself and others.

The importance of first contact is that it was a moment in time when Wiru produced and dramatically confronted new images of themselves as potential Europeans (cf. M.Strathern 1992, which refers to Melpa perceiving Europeans as transformed Melpa; also Clark 1988). The aim of the entire development era for Wiru was to become European, themselves 'in another form' (M.Strathern 1992:250). Wiru wanted to achieve an actual transformation and not just an equivalence in status, wealth and power.

As much as a national ceremonial like Anzac Day deals with a mythic chronotope, it is still one very much based on Western notions of history and causality. The chronotopes involved in Independence Day celebrations in Pangia are of another kind. The point is, if a shared sense of time and space is necessary for the emergence of nationalism, then very different ethnic nationalisms will (if they ever do) emerge out of the chronotopes of Highlanders. I have argued (Clark 1995) that Huli, for instance, have a millennial chronotope, in which unity presages dissolution if not renewal—a possible millennial ethnicity? At the time of writing, the warfare and 'ethnic cleansing' taking place in the former Yugoslavia, an inherent fission no longer contained by a totalitarian communist state, is a glimpse of the possible troubles

which could visit a Highlands region, no longer unified by the false peace and rhetoric of colonialism and development, and that is divided along the lines of regional ethnicity (or even a Papua New Guinea divided between Highlanders and 'Coastals'). A major difference with the Yugoslavian situation is that future conflict could suggest the total rejection of a nation-state which failed to consolidate itself, rather than its replication on a smaller scale.

IMAGINING THE STATE

Huli used to refer to the government, and many older people still do, as *honabi* or 'pale man'. People say that Europeans were the 'mother and father' of Huli (cf. O'Hanlon 1993:30 for the Wahgi), and similar notions are found in Pangia, although they are not equivalent to statements such as George Washington is the 'father of the nation'. Europeans are referred to in such terms because of their creation of a moral universe, based in part on the obligations and sentiments of kinship and their educational role in the bringing of peace and development. In terms of colonial relations of power, I suggest that *Huli-honabi* relations were not imagined as hierarchical, despite the obvious inequality of these relations, but as relations modelled upon those of followers to a big man. In other words, the political framework is ideologically one of egalitarianism, in which inequality is mystified by siblingship and sentiments of kinship (the Pangia interpretation of the Papua New Guinea flag lends some support to this).

The state, or an imposed and encompassing system of power relations, was perceived in egalitarian and individuated terms—as a white man. Australian nationalism is based upon a kind of egalitarian individualism (Kapferer 1988:14), and a tentative hypothesis for Tari is that the colonial and post-independence state was/is imagined in terms of an egalitarian collectivism (cf. Foster 1992). By this I mean that the state is personified as a 'big man', who is bound by the morality and mentality of reciprocity to look after and redistribute resources to his followers (see Gordon and Meggitt 1985:157). The big man is identified with, and to an extent *is,* the clan or political grouping; the state, then, is viewed as a political entity to which people belong as members of a kind of

supertribe. Membership of a state then becomes problematic in Western terms if, for instance, Huli are followers of the state and not citizens of it (cf. Ploeg 1989). *Pe fotnait,* government paydays, can be described as 'when the government kills pigs', or in Pangia as like going to a ceremonial feast for the distribution and sharing of food (*kue yoroko,* cooking money, is Wiru for *pe fotnait,* and refers to the transformative power of money derived from idioms of sacrifice [Clark n.d.]). But it is not necessary to subscribe to marxist philosophy to realize that conceptualizing the state as a big man tends to mystify the hierarchical (if imagined by Highlanders as egalitarian) incorporation of rural people into emergent class relations, even if this different experience of the state means that nationalism, if it develops, will take on a distinctly Melanesian and *local* as opposed to an European form.

It is believed in Pangia that Australian money was made by the Queen and Papua New Guinea currency made by Somare in Port Moresby (people prefer the K2 note because it is most like the one pound note). Bearing in mind that the flag is 'Somare's flag', we can see again evidence for the personification of power in the Papua New Guinea state—money is identified with Somare, widely known as the 'chief', the apotheosis of the big man. Robert Foster (pers. comm. 1992) points out that the most recent banknote, the K50 note, is very different from its predecessors, which contain symbols of traditional wealth, decorations and masks—in a word, 'culture'. The K50 note has a picture of Somare on one side, parliament house on the other. It is, like the flag, an iconic representation of the state, personified in Somare and embodied in the Sepik *haus tambaran* style of parliament house (Somare is from the Sepik). Incidentally, many non-Catholic people in Pangia don't like Somare's face on the K50 note because he is a Catholic-they say the next face to appear will be that of the Pope, then the number 666 will appear on the banknote and the world will come to an end, another illustration, if one is needed, of a Melanesian Gothic.[7] Given this interpretation of the state, it can not only be generous and protective like a big man, but also dangerous and perhaps even evil in the sense of amoral behaviour and the failure to reciprocate. The latter is what the state is continually accused of

by 'grass roots' people, and deviancy is always a potential of big men-they can be generous and benevolent, or dangerous and non-reciprocal (as, for instance, in the failure of the state to redistribute its perceived profits from gas, gold and oil).

To call the state a 'white man' is, from a contemporary Huli perspective, a direct accusation of non-reciprocity. Characterizations of Europeans as different from Huli take the form of statements such as 'brother sells to brother', the implication being that money is valued over siblingship and other forms of sociality created through exchange. Voting in elections is compared to gambling, in the sense that people lose in their engagement with the negative reciprocity of the state. I will discuss below the *nambis* (seaboard) as a metaphor for the state, and suggest that the *nambis,* through its connections with sorcery and witchcraft, is a source of pollution and deviancy, qualities that are associated with women (see Clark 1993a; 1995). Elected members, who travel to the *nambis* and rarely return except at election times, are sometimes fitted into this scenario of deviancy; they 'eat' the resources which should be put to productive uses in rural development, and drink beer, gamble, and chase after women instead of thinking about the groups which elected them. Waste, consumption, greed, and self-interest are 'female' attributes of deviancy, manifested in characterizations of the witch, which accentuate perceptions of the state as a maverick 'big man' whose interests are inimical to the welfare of the group. These points can be examined in further detail by considering new expressions of sorcery fears in Tari.

SORCERY AND THE PERIPHERY

Huli society had many forms of sorcery beliefs (see Frankel 1986: 144–146; Glasse 1965:41–42), which have disappeared or become attenuated since pacification. This was not a victory for Christianity as they have been largely replaced by a new belief known as *nambis poison* (coastal sorcery) which, because it so powerfully captures the essence of its forerunners, merely makes the old forms redundant while retaining much of their logic and structure. Sorcery beliefs reflect Huli concerns with boundaries and

deviance, the latter most strongly associated with women and the periphery (Goldman 1983:99, 223). Female pollution and sorcery, which can use menstrual blood as a poison, are both linked to the same ideas about boundary maintenance and maintaining a flow of power, and the disorder and illness which result from situations of breach (Goldman 1983:100).

Nambis poison involves object intrusion, and is a technique practised against Huli while they are outside Tari, or from outside the Tari basin if they are Tari residents. I was told that no Huli practises this sorcery, although Frankel (1986:147) states that some men bought the technique while away working. Whilst most forms of sorcery, and certainly the most lethal, were imported from surrounding societies (Frankel 1986:145), especially those to the west and south, *nambis poison* is explicitly associated by Huli with the east, the direction in which they must travel for employment and resources, and in which the state is located. The dependency of Huli on the east, and the resulting inequalities, a blocking of the flow, between Tari and eastern districts, accounts for the identification of the outside world as a realm of deviance (as the very name *nambis poison* indicates). Huli regarded themselves as being related to the west, south, and north through trade in goods and ideas, and this is reflected in Huli mythology and beliefs about sorcery effectiveness and the origin of cults (cf. Goldman 1983: 116). Yet these areas were classified as deviant because they were relatively unknown and a source of danger. They were identified with primordial female power and with death/contamination insofar as women are, in a sense, the quintessential 'other'. It is doubtful that any feelings of inequality generated these beliefs, as this was a perception influenced by Huli cosmology and not one created by economic or ideational dependency.

The relationship of Huli to the east (where in fact trade and ritual relations did exist), the *nambis* source of Christianity, power, and wealth, is of a different order. Inequalities and dependency are real, and no ritual or ideological techniques exist to effectively deal with them. The *nambis* now controls regenerative power and is truly 'outside' of male control and the organizational domains of Huli society, which could be glossed as

public and domestic (see Goldman 1983:101; Clark 1993a). At the Mount Kare goldfields, Huli men believed that gold was a substance analogous to menstrual blood, and that both could pollute them and cause illness if not death. Huli mythology about the discovery of gold at Mount Kare, which is a microcosm of the *nambis,* refers, like myths of old, to the external locus of fecundity and growth which is now identified with the state. Yet the boundaries between Huli and the periphery are maintained at an increasing cost, and disorder and illness, symptoms of deviance epitomized by women, have free rein, particularly given beliefs about sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and witch-like prostitutes who travel into and out of the *nambis* (see Clark 1993b). That the 'nambis' cannot be controlled contributes to its deviancy and, as 'the boundaries of malignity have been pushed yet further as knowledge of other places has increased' (Frankel 1986:185), this is given expression through a modern form of sorcery belief.

Beliefs about the pollution of men by alluvial gold at Mount Kare are congruent with those concerning *nambis poison*. Both are products of attempts to comprehend the relationship between Tari and the new periphery, each cast in the idiom of deviance and illness. Their similarities become more evident when the cure for *nambis poison* is examined. Projectile intrusion was a feature of *tomo* sorcery imported by Huli from the periphery, and was also associated with the trickster spirit Iba Tiri, 'water fool' (Goldman 1983:224), who fired his arrows into people. Frankel (1986:147) states that the resemblances between this form of attack and *nambis poison* account for the same ritual treatment, the removal of Iba Tiri's arrows, being applied to both. The objects extracted by curers from victims of this sorcery include glass, wire, and even cake, i.e. items of a specifically *nambis* provenance. It is more than the similarity between forms of attack that suggest references to Iba Tiri in the treatment of *nambis poison*. It is the role of this trickster in creating disorder (Goldman 1983:225), and his aptness as a mediator of opposed domains (water and ground, good and bad fortune, man and woman, etc.), that involves him in the illnesses of gold pollution and the new sorcery—also imported

from the periphery but one where the state is located (see Clark 1993a).

The evidence presented suggests that Iba Tiri now mediates between the boundaries of Tari and the state, a new periphery of power, mirroring the unsatisfactory nature of Huli experience with the state. He is associated, through his cleansing and binding of waters, with the 'centripetal tendency of the cosmos… (and its) geographical and conceptual unity' (Goldman 1983:119). Iba Tiri has the potential, however, to withhold these services, causing blockage, and his appropriateness as a symbol of the interaction between Huli and *nambis,* my gloss for the state, arises out of the fact that this unity is threatened by a shift in the control of cosmic potency. That Iba Tiri figures in beliefs about gold pollution and *nambis poison,* evidence of an entropic world, supports this view. Bhabha (1990:2–4) comments on the Western notion of the nation as Janus-faced, in part related to the ambivalence generated out of its confusion of public and private spheres. It may be that Iba Tiri is a Huli version of Janus, reflecting Huli ambivalence about their interactions with the state, its lack of reciprocity (blockage), and its confusion of boundaries such as public/domestic.[8] Yet Iba Tiri is, for the Huli, a Janus which haunts their imagination of the state not of the nation, a 'figure of prodigious doubling' in the state-space

> where meanings may be partial…and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image (ibid.:3).

The argument so far is supported by Lederman's analysis (1981) of a similar type of intrusive sorcery among the Mendi, known as *botol* (glass). She relates this idiom, in an insight entirely apposite to the Huli situation, to the destructive power of Western commodities for social relationships. Also, *botol*

> contains a critique of Western society, where the exchange of products—which have become ends in themselves-threatens

> to overwhelm the indigenous meaning of exchange, as the medium through which relations between people are continually expanded, deepened and equalized (ibid.:26).

This is similar to Taussig's (1980) argument about the devil contract as a critique of capitalism, although it lends supports to a claim made elsewhere (Clark 1993a) that the critique is not so much of capitalism as of a failure of reciprocity on the part of the state. The latter is associated with the white man and the *nambis,* such that the state is conflated with notions of both benevolence (as mother and father) and deviance. The state is a fetishization of the social relations of colonialism (cf. Taussig 1992), and its images are a product of a specifically Huli history.

CITIZEN, BIG MAN, CHIEF, STATE

Despite common perceptions of the state and national/provincial members as deviant 'big men', some politicians do, however, achieve renown and respect as proper 'big men'. The classic example is Iambakey Okuk, a Simbu man who achieved Highlands-wide prominence as leader of the oppositional National Party, and one-time Deputy Prime Minister, at the time of his death in the late 1980s. Okuk's death has only added to his reputation, yet paradoxically his success as a politician was not so much as a representative of the state, nor did it result in a more positive attitude towards the state. Okuk was a 'big man' for the Highlands region, and for many he epitomized an opposition not an alliance with the *nambis* government He was admired and remembered for his ability to manipulate and divert funds from this government—particularly for his gifts of cartons of beer at election rallies (beer is a political symbol of some importance; cf. O'Hanlon 1993:40–41)—in much the same way that one big man outmanoeuvres and dominates another (see Strathern 1984:104–105, where he argues that Highlands politicians act more like 'chiefs' than 'big man', and that this redistribution of government funding was a deliberate national policy for securing votes). Indeed, his death provided the occasion for an indigenous critique of postcolonial government.

Just as the demise of a big man is often believed to be the result of sorcery or other types of violence from rival big men (Somare, the archetypical 'big man', is often directly accused of killing Okuk), stories from many parts of the Highlands implicate the state either in a conspiracy to kill Okuk by a long debilitating illness (of the kind induced by sorcery), or to cover-up the fact that he is alive and well and imprisoned by the police and politicians somewhere in Papua New Guinea (or in the Vatican according to some informants). These different versions sometimes merge into one, Okuk is killed and then comes back to life (Okuk as a combination big man/Jesus/Highlands Elvis?), the state is terrified of what the people will do if they find out the truth so it hides him in a remote location in the Highlands. Okuk's son is said to be wandering the Highlands looking for his father. Other versions have it that his illness was used as an excuse to announce his death and hide him away. Followers of Okuk want to dig up his coffin to prove that it is empty but the police will not allow this, proving to the satisfaction of many that Okuk must still be alive. All versions point to the motive for Okuk's death/imprisonment as jealousy and fear on the part of police and politicians for his knowledge, leadership ability, and success in bringing development. The state is explicitly blamed for holding back development, not through neglect but through direct intention.[9]

Mention was made above of the connection between nationalism and death, particularly that forged by the enormous fatalities incurred on the battlefield in conflicts with foreign aggressors. The connection made in the Highlands is rather one between the state and individual death, as stories which circulated after Okuk's demise indicate. A 1991 edition of *Paradise,* the in-flight magazine for Air Niugini, contained an article on a death compensation payment in Mendi. A procession of men carrying money and pork was headed by a man upholding the Papua New Guinea flag; unfortunately the text does not provide any information for the presence of the flag. In Tari, the elaborate grave of a much respected big man, recently deceased from a 'natural' death of old age, had a Papua New Guinea flag painted at each end. This is perhaps a positive perception of the state as 'big man'. I also

observed a provincial flag hung inside the grave of a man recently flown back from Port Moresby for burial. The flag is that of Gulf province where the man died of malaria, sorcery, or was beaten to death by Sepik men, depending on who was recounting the story. It may be that the presence of 'state' flags at deaths which involve violence and compensation is connected with a negative perception of the state as 'big man'. In this example, and in others where people had been killed in distant places or in towns, people did talk of extracting compensation from the state for these deaths, which fits with the notion of the state as a 'big man' who is negotiated with for compensation for fatalities he may not necessarily have caused, and with the notion of the state as dangerous and non-reciprocal. Compensation is rarely paid except in instances where the state is directly responsible for a death, such as from a police beating. In Kundiawa in 1990 I observed people dressed as warriors and as mourners who marched around the town and to government offices to protest such a killing and demand compensation.

Located on Tari station is a largely moribund cultural centre, yet inside the enclosure is the grave of a Huli premier of Southern Highlands Province who died in a plane crash in 1980 (the cultural centre came later and was built around the grave). The connection between death and the state is widened in this instance to include ethnic identity, indicating that culture is sometimes fetishized as part of a process of thinking about new levels of membership, although the centre is acknowledged as being more for tourists than a site where Huli themselves go to contemplate their historical and cultural identity. If it to some extent functions as a local version of Westminster Cathedral, it is a Huli not Papua New Guinean creation, suggesting once again that these new levels are local and not national conceptions. The examples discussed above serve to illustrate the thesis that death, time, and space all help to create a new horizon of agency which is experienced by people as they become incorporated into the control of the *nambis*. New forms of consciousness arise out of this encompassment into the temporal geography of the state but they are not, as yet, the precursors to nationalism, merely to a form of

ethnicity which unites Huli—an unity which was once expressed in the mythology and rituals of ground fertility (Goldman 1983:119) —in potential opposition to the state. Regional ethnicities may presage a future round of claims for independence, this time from the postcolonial state itself.

NOTES

The fieldwork upon which this article is based was conducted under the auspices of the National Research Institute in Port Moresby, and financially assisted by James Cook University. The Tari Research Unit, a branch of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research, facilitated the research in many ways, particularly through the persons of Jan Dyke, John Vail and David Whiting. The article was first presented at a seminar for the NRI, and later for a conference at ANU organized by Nicholas Thomas and Ton Otto, and at both venues many useful suggestions were made, particularly by Bob Foster, Mike Nihill, Chris Ballard and David Kandason. I wish to thank all of these institutions and individuals, as well as numerous Wiru and Huli people, for their assistance and support, although the final argument and any errors it contains are my own. While Michael Fischer's article 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory' (1986) is not directly referred to, it does influence my argument and title.

1. See, for example, Clark (1989; 1992), for some of the implications of gender in this transformation.
2. I realize that in this article I subscribe to the convenient fiction of the 'Wiru' and the 'Huli,' rather than 'some Wiru/Huli' at 'some time'. Imagining that large populations can be anthropologically categorized on the basis of experiences with small numbers of informants is part of what Geertz (1988) calls anthropology's 'magic' in the production of authentic texts. Yet this chapter is not intended as an ethnography and is meant to be suggestive and, hopefully, imaginative. One more fiction shouldn't hurt the argument.
3. Ironically, it seems that research into nationalism would be more fruitful among the less 'developed' Melanesian neighbours of Highlanders in Irian Jaya, who all experience a common history of oppression and exploitation by Indonesian imperialist forces, and where there is widespread support for the OPM guerrilla

movement, which has its own flag and, I believe, 'national' anthem for West Papua.

4. There are signs that Highlands 'culture', at least that which pertains to the upholding of morality, is beginning to be used as a resource, by politicians and educated people in particular, in the construction of regional ethnicities and in appeals for proper forms of behaviour in the face of a perceived breakdown in cultural values. The museum more than the memorial may become the key site for the production of a national or supra-tribal consciousness (Nicholas Thomas pers. comm. 1994), and cultural 'revivals' I have witnessed support such a claim.
5. Unfortunately, little is known of local interpretations of the Australian flag (see Merlan and Rumsey 1991) but an interesting comparison can be made with Sahlins' (1985) discussion of the Maori chief Hone Heke and the symbolically violent and bloody struggle for the British flag at Kororareka. Some older Wiru I talked to believed that the flag was the 'boss' of Europeans.
6. This makes for an interesting comparison with an interpretation of the flag made by a Bougainvillean man (cited in Griffin 1973:116–117),

> When I first saw the flag… I thought Papua New Guinea would never unite at all… In my opinion the red part and the yellow bird of paradise refers to the redskins [Papuans], the black part with the Southern Cross is for the Bougainvilleans… What would happen if the two triangles fell apart? That's how Papua New Guinea is going to be in the future and the way the flag was designed I suspect that we must keep on with the secession for Bougainville. The flag is not a sign of unity but a sign of segregation. Why should the red part be above the black part?

The influence of different experiences of colonialism and independence are clearly evident in this account of the meaning of the flag.

7. There were reports of people refusing to be paid with the K50 note when it was first introduced, regarding the note as not 'real' money because it did not have wealth items displayed on it (Chris Ballard pers. comm. 1994).
8. There is a striking similarity between what Bhabha (1990:4) writes of boundaries and the nation and the argument made here about boundaries and the state:

> The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation.

9. Okuk visited Australia shortly before his death, and one rumour in Port Moresby is that Australian plastic surgeons created a sculpture of his body for burial in the Highlands, and that Okuk is still alive (David Kandason pers. comm. 1994). Australia is here implicated in the coastal conspiracy against Highlanders.

CHAPTER FOUR
Commemorating Missionary Heroes: Local Christianity and Narratives of Nationalism

Michael W. Young

> 'A very happy hundredth birthday to us all… The United Church and the Government must make a joint effort to build and bring peace to our nation, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour…'
>
> Bishop Namunu, on the Centenary of William Bromilow's arrival in Dobu.

> 'He delivered us from the power of darkness' *Colossians* 1:13.
>
> Inscribed on Thomas Smaill's memorial stone in Nikaura, unveiled during the Centenary of his arrival.

INTRODUCTION

In what has been described as 'the most solidly Christian part of the world' (Forman 1982:227), the emergent nationalisms of the Pacific are heavily infused with Christian teachings. Indeed, several Pacific nations define themselves in their constitutions as Christian; their indigenized Christianity is 'intrinsic to sovereign statehood' (Jolly 1992a:342). Small wonder, then, that narratives of nationalism in the Pacific are frequently underwritten by a salvationist master-narrative deriving from Christianity. To a remarkable degree the modern Pacific nation rides on Christianity's back, and in the Melanesian states particularly (Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) the state not only relies upon the Churches to provide many basic services it cannot itself afford, but it also co-opts Christianity's ideological

purchase on hearts and minds—its narratives—for its own integrative purposes. Christianity can be promoted, then, 'as a source of national unity despite local diversity' (Jolly ibid.). In every national celebration, I would wager, a Christian sub-text can be found.

As I illustrate in this essay, however, the converse can also occur: in certain Christian celebrations national narratives are deftly interwoven. This should cause no surprise, for everywhere in the Pacific today, religious organizations (whether national or regional) are enmeshed in political activities concerning economic development and foreign aid. There is also overlap of spheres of authority—secular and religious—as when political leaders are also men of the cloth. In the Melanesian nations, where education had been almost exclusively in the hands of missionaries until after the Second World War, most national leaders owe their education to the Churches, and the indirect influence of the Churches on national politics is quite patent (Trompf 1991:159).

As much recent work has shown (see for example Barker 1990), local, vernacular or village-based Christianity is by no means identical to the Christianity brought by European missionaries, still less the regional Christianity that has developed in the wake of denominational linkages established in the nineteeth century, many of which preceded colonial government and the creation of the political units which were to become new nations. Today, after three or four generations since the first converts, people are entitled to speak of their own 'traditional' Christianity.

In this essay I consider two pioneer missionaries whose evangelical achievements created a significant place for themselves as 'heroes' of a local Christian mythology. In particular, I describe the centennial celebrations held to commemorate their historical appearance on the local scene. I view these celebrations, and in particular the re-enactments of their arrival, as narratives—stories which people tell to themselves to make or remake their local identity. Along the way, I shall unpick the threads of covert national narratives which suffuse the overtly Christian ones.

THE MISSIONARY AS HERO

The stranger hero is a familiar figure in Pacific mythologies and, therefore, no stranger to anthropologists. The subspecies missionary hero has not received as much attention as other types of culture hero, and while it would be absurd to claim that every pioneer missionary became a hero to his people (I use 'he' advisedly), it is surely a phenomenon more common than the ethnographic literature might suggest (but see White 1992). In large measure, the oversight is due to the imperial hegemony of missionary texts: that is, the silence of older missionary sources concerning indigenous perceptions of the mission. It was only when anthropologists began to give serious attention to what villagers were saying about their mission-influenced histories that local representations of pioneer missionaries could be compared with the official hagiographies which formed the orthodox genre of missionary literature. While the latter certainly celebrate their pioneers with fulsome reverence, they stop some way short of full-blown heroization. After all, in any church there are likely to be many contenders for this status, whereas for the local community there is apt to be only one. Further, while heroes and saints are essential to the grand narratives of missionary endeavour, not least for their inspirational and edifying example, missionary bodies are not in the business of providing home-spun mythical charters for local village or island communities. Therefore the role and function of heroes in church and community are very different In sum, while both appeal to 'foundational fictions' (in Bhabha's phrase) through the use of 'conversion narratives' (in Geoffrey White's phrase), missionary tracts celebrate their pioneers as exemplars of a specifically moral and Christian achievement, whereas local narratives celebrate them as social and cultural innovators whose changes go far beyond mere religious conversion. As White puts it: '…the agents of missionary change in conversion narratives… become mythic culture heroes responsible for instituting the moral order as it is known today' (1992:136).

There is a political dimension, moreover, for the 'darkness' from which missionaries delivered their people can latterly be construed to mean the colonial as well as the heathen era. Mythical

representation of both may be necessary to construct a contrasting image of an enlightened, decolonized present. Rhetorically, nationalism may thus become conflated with the 'light' brought by Christianity.

The present essay is not a comparative study in the broader sense, so I do not consider more than two instances of missionary hero which fortuitously occured in two areas of Melanesia where I have conducted intensive fieldwork: the D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago of Milne Bay Province in Papua New Guinea, and Epi Island in central Vanuatu. I leave entirely out of account, therefore, the euhemerist myths created about the lives and deaths of such eminent pioneer missionaries as James Chalmers of the Gulf of Papua, Albert Maclaren and Copland King of the northeast coast of Papua, Charles Abel of Kwato Island, George Brown of New Britain and Peter Milne of Nguna Island in Vanuatu, to name but five.[1] Nor do I deal here with those indigenous missionary heroes, local catechists and the like, who mediated the mission's message and served as cultural brokers; while they are certainly celebrated in many places (see White 1992 for Santa Isabel examples), in the areas most familiar to me they are greatly overshadowed by the figure of the white pioneer missionary. Clearly, there can be many modalities under the rubric of missionary hero, and one would need to consider a wide range of such figures to answer adequately some crucial questions. What are the local conditions conducive to the creation of missionaries as popular heroes? What was it, precisely, that conspired to make them the right men in the right place at the right time? What, if any, personal qualities of the historic personages were required for the retrospective conferal of the mantle of culture hero? How long a period of time must elapse before a pioneering missionary is elevated to heroic status?

A number of necessary conditions are fairly easy to identify (though there may well be exceptions in particular cases): (i) *priority—the* missionary must have arrived first; (ii) *familiarity*—the missionary must have been present for long enough to have made a difference to his chosen community and to be remembered for it; (iii) *conversion*—there has to be acceptance of Christianity,

at least to the degree that a local community perceives it as beneficial and correspondingly disparages its own pagan past (such, of course, would be the main measure of the missionary's 'success' in the eyes of his Church); (iv) *facilitation*—a missionary must have belonged to a denomination (or mission sub-culture) which abetted if not encouraged his mythicization, such that an accommodating dialectic of discourses between Church and Congregation could ensue; (v) *temporal*—a period of time must pass, probably not less than a full generation, before an oral tradition becomes settled in concensus and mythicization can occur.

One might infer a couple more necessary conditions of a less empirical kind: that there is active suppression of historical facts and competing conversion narratives; and that the missionary's 'story' can be elided with other myths or otherwise accommodated to indigenous narrative forms, such that the rhetoric of his myth is readily understood and just as readily transmitted. In other words, it must have the virtue of simplicity, and historical facts which do not suit the premise of the myth are suppressed and forgotten. In its simplest form the myth is even reducible to a basic conversion formula, according to which Social (or Moral) State A is transformed by the heroic agent into Social (or Moral) State B. The agent's message and mission are indivisible in this process, but it is 'by virtue' of them that the transformation takes place. In ideologically valorized terms, and by a general process of reification and inversion identified by Thomas (1992), State A subsequently comes to be perceived as 'bad' and historically untenable, and is therefore superceded by State B which is 'good' and historically vindicated. The inevitablity of this episodic sequence does not preclude a degree of struggle and 'conquest', and these may be essential to the narrative structure of such myths and to their commemorative dramatizations.[2]

Remarkably, perhaps, these modern myths are not unduly compromised by disillusioned or disaffected elements within a community. As Kahn (1983) has shown for Wamira, people can claim to be Christians on Sunday and sorcerers on Monday; they can admit to disappointment with the failure of Christianity to

deliver the goods (material as well as spiritual) while yet continuing to conform to the habits of Christian observance.

RE-ENACTMENT AND COMMEMORATION

In what follows I shall pay equal attention to the (re-)enactment of the myth of the missionary hero as to its oral representations. Indeed, the narrative of the advent of the missionary hero is more 'telling' when physically enacted than it is when orally redacted, since the commemorative lesson is visually presented and thereby greatly reinforced (see Connerton 1989). The performative 'telling', then, becomes a rite, 'a cult enacted' (in Connerton's phrase), one which is sensually apprehended and rendered morally educative by virtue of being 'embodied'. As with other commemorations, repetition implies continuity with the past, and the backward glance enacted by the rite is to a moment in time when 'history' began or changed irrevocably (the Crucifixion, the Armistice, Hiroshima Day, and so forth). For the duration of the enactment, the commemoration abolishes time and brings the past visibly and tangibly into the present. The familiarity of re-enactment breeds certainty, and identities are thereby endorsed and confirmed. When the commemorative re-enactments are rigidly dictated by the calendar (as are Christian commemorative festivals), a sense of reliving a momentous event is even more effectively engendered through familiarity.

Let me illustrate with a specific example of an enacted conversion narrative which is simultaneously a commemoration. On 19th June, the day of the year commemorated by the Methodists as marking the commencement of their mission in eastern Papua, there are annual reenactments of Dr William Bromilow's first imaginary encounter with local people. These re-enactments are held not only on Dobu, but on every island evangelized by Bromilow's missionaries. Picture a booted, white-shirted missionary in a sun-helmet, clutching a Bible, who, with a nervous party of followers in train, disembarks from a small boat and confronts on the beach a rabble of fearsomely decorated warriors, prancing and howling and shaking their clubs and spears. This scenario of primal contact is re-enacted more or less

faithfully every year in dozens of parishes and 'circuits' (in Methodist parlance) throughout the major archipelagoes of Milne Bay Province, namely the D'Entrecasteaux (where it all began), the Trobriands, the Woodlarks and the Louisiades.

Commemorative re-enactments of missionary first encounters (what White would call 'conversion dramas') are probably ubiquitous in the Pacific, though they seem to have received only passing attention by anthropologists and historians.[3] Assuming that they were not independently invented in every island or archipelago, there is an interesting problem of their origin. When were they introduced, and by whom? Were they diffused from one area to another, from one mission to another, or did each mission independently 'invent' its own? Bwaidoka people of Goodenough Island, for example, claim to have performed them annually for as long as they can recall, though in their case it is easy to suppose that they were introduced by the South Sea Islanders who provided the 'front line' of missionary advance in what was then British New Guinea. (By cultivating closer contact with the Melanesians than the more aloof, hierarchically distant white missionaries, Polynesian teachers introduced many of their own cultural practices into Papua.) So it is plausible to suppose that one or another of the late nineteenth century missionary sub-cultures of Fiji, Samoa or Tonga was the immediate source from which such re-enactment ceremonies were derived. Yet Anglican-taught communities on the mainland coast adjacent to the D'Entrecasteaux also perform similar annual re-enactments to commemorate the arrival of Albert Maclaren and Copland King who stepped ashore at Wamira in 1891, though the Anglican Mission employed very few South Sea Island missionaries (Wetherell 1977).

While some broad historical research will be necessary before we can begin to trace a plausible origin of such commemorative ceremonies, their present-day performance by villagers is clearly linked to their consciousness of having a vernacular Christianity that is uniquely their own. An objectification of local history becomes possible by means of these re-enactments, a history which might even be conceived to have begun with the arrival of the

missionary hero and the 'light' he brought. In dramatizing this event (with as much dramatic license as might be necessary), local Christians also assert their identity with the wider mission by enacting stereotyped, even allegorical, roles of missionary and Savage, and the ultimate transformation of the latter into a 'Christian Person' (White 1992).

In its canonical form the commemorative performance in the islands with which I am most familiar has three core episodes or Acts. Following White, these might be labelled Approach, Resistance and Acceptance: a structural sequence which-significantly-White found in the conversion narratives I recorded in Goodenough Island (Young 1977) as well as in those he recorded in Santa Isabel (White 1992:159, 179).

I. Missionary and party approach by boat, while savages make warlike clamour on the beach. When the missionary lands he is challenged by savages who threaten him with their weapons. Village women stand back, terrified, or urge their menfolk to kill and eat the strangers, for the savages invariably represent themselves as cannibals.[4]
II. Missionary makes signs of peace, and approaches a warrior leader. The savages gather around uncertainly while the two men exchange some form of greeting and perhaps gifts (cloth for a coconut etc.). The savages relax their hold on their weapons.
III. Missionary stands on a stone or tree stump and addresses the crowd of savages. He may read from a large bible, sing a hymn, or say a prayer with eyes closed and hands clasped. He will sometimes do all three, while the crowd looks bewildered, then relieved, then respectful. The savages lay down their weapons. Some even appear to undergo instant conversion and join in the singing and praying.

The performance may conclude at this point or there may be a final Act in which the missionary shakes hands with everyone and departs (as did Dr Bromilow) having made clear promises to return; or he may be conducted around an imaginary landscape by the savage leader to find a site on which to build the mission house (as was Thomas Smaill).

The simple paradigmatic drama I have described forms what Kenneth Burke (1969) might call a 'syllogism' since it has an inbuilt logical progression: the causal development is restricted and every participant and spectator knows precisely what will happen next. This rigidity of form means there can be very few surprises in the unfolding of the drama. It is for this reason a rite, enacted annually on the same spot (ideally, the actual landing place of the missionary or the place where he delivered his first sermon), which for the moment of re-enactment is a sacred site and may even be commemorated as such.[5] This is not to say, however, that such ritualized performances are unrelentingly solemn and dignified. Indeed, most are enlivened by parody and comical caricature (see White [1992:139] who emphasizes this aspect by referring to Santa Isabel *thukma* as 'skits') though the comic embellishments do not compromize the more serious message.

It is clear that the principal agent in this archetypal drama is the missionary. He initiates every Act, while the savages (even the leader if there is one) merely react.[6] Although the savages' essentially passive role is simply to be savage, to be pacified and to be converted, they must still dramatize these states. Their behaviour describes the very process of pacification: from the initial Approach (I) in which they fiercely brandish their weapons, to the Resistance phase (II) of simply holding them poised or relaxed, to the final Acceptance (III) when the weapons are laid aside. This transition is reflected in the actors' facial expressions and vocalizations, modulating gradually from an aggressive 'hardness' associated with warriordom to a meek 'softness' characteristic of the good Christian. We may observe that pacification is more easily dramatized than 'lightness' or 'knowledge' (though appearing to look cheerfully enlightened and sagacious may well be within the theatrical repertoire of local actors), but compared to the concreteness and visibility of the gestures associated with weapon-weilding, these more abstract themes appear subordinate to that of pacification, the transition from a state of war to a state of peace. This is as it should be, for peace would appear to be the doctrinal *sine qua non* of all other Christian teachings and all other moral and social transformations

they are intended to bring about. In the drama, the missionary—conspicuously without arms himself—is a man of peace; he holds up his hands to heaven-and the crowd-to show his empty hands, his guileless trust and faith. He is likely to be 'armed' with the superior weapon of the Bible, of course, for the Word is mightier than the Spear. This juxtaposition of Bible and spear is evocative of the Church Militant, and images of warriordom, armed struggle and conquest abound in the missionary literature, in sermons and hymns (see Young 1980 for some Methodist examples). So there is an answering deployment of martial tropes in the missionaries' discourse which comfortably complements that of the feuding Melanesians. The drama, almost banal in its simplicity, is essentially about war routed by peace.[7]

The historical, ironic truth is that many missionaries did carry firearms into the field with them, weapons more lethal than the savages' clubs and spears. When Bromilow landed on Dobu Island his party took their revolvers and Winchester rifles ashore. *Lord of the Isles,* the ship that brought them, also carried a prefabricated mission house designed 'by a prudent architect' in the form of 'three concentric rectangles through which the occupants could retreat to a central armoury if attacked' (Wetherell 1977:29). I return below to the impressive show of *force majeur* which accompanied Bromilow to Dobu Island. For the moment I need to outline his career.

WILLIAM BROMILOW (1857–1929)

Bromilow was born in Geelong, Victoria, the son of an English bricklayer. Ordained in 1879, he promptly married and sailed for Fiji with his bride, where the couple evangelized for the following decade. In 1891 Bromilow was appointed chairman of the newly-formed Wesleyan New Guinea Mission, and on 19 June of that year he landed on Dobu Island (together with six other white missionaries and 65 South Sea Islanders from Samoa, Fiji and Tonga) to begin his evangelical mission at the 'savage heart' of the D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago, of what was then the Eastern Division of British New Guinea.[8]

The Wesleyan Secretary-General, George Brown (characterized by one historian as 'the most ambitious missionary strategist in the Pacific' [Wetherell 1977:99]), had already visited Dobu the previous year and judged it an ideal headquarters. Dobu commanded (and still commands) local respect for many reasons. In the nineteenth century this small volcanic island bred the fiercest cannibal warriors in the region. Dobu was and still is an important locus in the famous *kula* ring. George Brown chose it, then, largely for its strategic position. Bromilow was later to promote the myth that he selected the location himself, because 'the Dobuans by their fierce bloodthirstiness offered a test case for missionary work, accepted in the principle expressed by John Wesley, "Go not only to those who need you, but to those who need you most'" (Bromilow 1929:60). This particular rhetorical version of what Burke might call a 'perspective by incongruity' enabled Bromilow to highlight his achievement of conversion by exaggerating the opposition. Nevertheless, the show of strength that accompanied Bromilow's party was probably unprecedented in the Pacific: at least four ships containing, in addition to the 73 members of the missionary party, several resident magistrates, local village constables and interpreters, as well as the Administrator himself, Sir William MacGregor, together with his armed entourage. The Dobuans, one can well imagine, were suitably awed.

Conversion was comparatively swift and ruthless, and by the turn of the century the mission had also implanted itself in all of the larger islands of the Massim. The Dobuan language, transmitted by local teachers and white missionaries alike, soon became the mission's *lingua franca*. The name of Dokta Blomlo, or Saragigi (*sara*—take out; *gigi*—teeth) as he was more affectionately known, spread quickly along the sea-routes of the *kula* and his eventual fame must have been the envy of ambitious *kula-traders*. Bromilow lived at or near Dobu for a total of twenty years (1891–1907 and 1920–25). He completed a translation of the Bible into Dobuan after being 're-called' to his mission field, though it was during his first period in Dobu that he wrought the most profound changes. Despite his sanctimonious and crudely paternalistic views

and despite his inflexible denigration of 'the essential vileness' of Dobuan culture, Bromilow clearly came to be accepted and loved by the islanders. Latterly, with their access to good schooling facilities, Dobuans have come to exercise an influence on the provincial and national stages out of all proportion to their numbers: as teachers, doctors, lawyers and other professionals. And latterly, needless to say, Bromilow has become a culture-hero. Yet there is a real sense in which Bromilow 'invented' the Dobuans as a tribal category by extending the anglicized nominal to include surrounding groups who spoke dialects of what Bromilow took to be the principal dialect of Eduguala: the locality in which he built his mission.[9]

BROMILOW IN BWAIDOKA

That Bromilow's reputation and subsequent hero-status did not require him to have actually lived in the communities which came to revere him is demonstrated by the case of Bwaidoka (earlier Bwaidoga), a large village in Mud Bay, southeast Goodenough Island. The people of Goodenough numbered Dobuans among their traditional enemies, and Bromilow makes much of the fact that they were 'treacherous in peace as well as fierce in war' (1929: 219). Bromilow first visited Bwaidoka in 1897 together with George Brown and several other white missionaries (including his wife and teenaged daughter). Two years later a station was established at Wailagi in Bwaidoka. It was staffed by a series of Australian missionaries but Bromilow paid it only fleeting visits for although Bwaidoka became the centre of a 'circuit' it was peripheral to the Synod headquarters at Dobu. Bromilow's local fame, then, was mediated largely by native catechists and missionary helpers trained at Dobu.

Some years ago I published an article which compared two sets of narratives, one authored by Bromilow and the other related by male elders of Bwaidoka (Young 1977). I showed how the demise of warfare and cannibalism in Bwaidoka and the almost simultaneous advent of Christianity (*tafalolo*) are represented in the oral tradition in a complementary or congruent set of basic terms, The transition from war to peace and darkness to light (or

ignorance to knowledge) was mediated by the foreigner who became a culture hero.

I documented a curious structural, thematic and imagery-invested 'convergence' between Bromilow's autobiographical account of his first visit to Goodenough Island and the Bwaidokans' oral accounts of their last acts of war and cannibalism: events to which Bwaidogans believe Bromilow directly responded. The narratives converge because they draw upon a common pool of representations. 'Dr Bromilow came from England to Papua to save us' (ibid.:144) could well serve as the one-line summary of his life that Bromilow himself might have endorsed. There is no mystery in this convergence of narrative theme and structure, for Bromilow would have been influenced by Papuan imagery just as half a century or more of regular church-going had exposed local mythologers to the powerful tropes of the mission, with their militant and Manichean appeal (see Young 1980). The latter were absorbed, internalized and adopted as readily as the embodied gestures of Christian conversion, such as the handshake, the smiled greeting, or the head bowed in prayer.

More than forty years after Bromilow's first visit to Bwaidoka (which in George Brown's autobiographical recall was conducted rather like a cheerful picnic [1897:35–37]), the Methodist's official version of the event became fixed: 'The news of cannibal feasts in that area claimed his attention. That was the beginning of our work there, and the end of cannibalism' (Rundle 1941). Likewise in the oral tradition of Bwaidoka, though there the last cannibal victim is invested with a sacrificial role: in teleological fashion his death 'called' Bromilow and his gospel to the people of southern Goodenough to transform their lives. The eliding of events is a characteristic synecdoche of oral history: one event or one person may stand for many. In this case, too, one victim stands for all victims of the 'wars' (the sequence of retributive killings) which preceded Bromilow's arrival, just as Bromilow stands for all missionaries of that era (including his genial superior, George Brown). In the oral tradition, the last act of cannibalism was a narrative peripeteia, a hinge upon which local history swings, a turning point after which nothing could ever be the same again:

'Bromilow came because men were eating each other'. The detailed narratives of killing and counter-killing, perfidy and treachery, create the image of a society in Hobbesian chaos, 'one blighted by insecurity and offering only the simulacrum of succour to its members' (Young 1977:143). Bromilow was 'the outsider called from afar, the white mediator and imperious bringer of light, knowledge and peace who effects the beginning of a transformation of the Bwaidokan moral order' (ibid.:144).

The rapidity of conversion in Goodenough (and perhaps more generally throughout the Massim) was facilitated by the indigenous significance of institutionalized trade-partnerships called *tolama* which extended the 'security circle' of any given group. The mutually hostile communities of Goodenough relied upon *tolama* relations to facilitate trade and exchange: one's inherited *tolama* were supposed to guarantee one's safety when visiting their territory. *Tolama* ideology was based on the notion of *yave*, 'to save life', and *tolama* partnerships were formed whenever a person, in danger of being killed and eaten, was rescued, hidden, or otherwise saved (*yave*). The term *tolama* also means a physical support (e.g. a platform), though in the human sense it connotes protection, succour and bodily 'salvation'.

It is not too fanciful to claim that Dr Bromilow became a kind of *tolama* to all Goodenough Islanders: a foreign 'saviour' who extended his protection (and the protection of his mission) to any who might need it. Significantly, one of the first mission boats to operate from Wailagi, the mission station at Bwaidoka, was named *Tolama*. I suggest, therefore, that *tolama* provided an indigenous secular model for the missionaries' doctrine of salvation, for local Melanesians would not initially have grasped any distinction between bodily and spiritual salvation.

At the service I attended in 1973, which concluded the anniversary celebration of Bromilow's arrival, the principal theme was 'salvation'. Bromilow's name was invoked more frequently than that of any apostle and second only to that of Jesus himself. The sub-text was obvious. Bromilow saves, as Jesus saves: God sent His only begotten son to save us, and likewise He sent Bromilow to save the people of Goodenough. The mission became the

reliable, unbetraying *tolama* of all islanders in forging relationships which transcend family, clan and locality, in extending thereby the possibily of a universal brotherhood. Although Bromilow was too late to save the last cannibal victim, by challenging the hostile spears and bringing lasting peace (so the myth goes), he personifies the mission as a collective *tolama*. By this logic he is the 'saviour' of the people of Goodenough Island.

There is an historical corrective to be added. Bromilow was, in fact, by no means the first white man to visit this part of Goodenough. Captain Moresby had anchored offshore in 1874; Administrator MacGregor and a large party of miners had visited in 1888; and it is highly probable that many casual traders, pearlers, at least one naturalist, and several government officers (including the notorious resident magistrate Captain Monckton) also paid brief visits to southern Goodenough before Bromilow. In 1893, on MacGregor's third visit to the 'large population' of Mud Bay, he was greeted by 'a quiet and friendly people, who came unarmed and were very desirous of trading' (1893–94:12). Yet all these white visitors—including that other missionary hero George Brown—have been forgotten in Bwaidoka. Collective memory of them has been erased in the service of the mission's narrative, which categorically states in self-validating fashion that Bromilow *must* have been first because they celebrate him as a messenger of peace who brought *tafalolo*.

DOBU: 100 YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE D'ENTRECASTEAUX

In June 1991 Dobu played host to some three thousand visitors who attended the centenary celebrations of the local Methodist Mission (which had amalgamated with the United Church in 1968). To celebrate the advent of Bromilow and one hundred years of Christianity Dobu people held the biggest party in their history. A plethora of committees and subcommittees convened and planned for two years. Hundreds of village communities raised funds, planted special gardens and fed additional pigs. About 200 overseas visitors attended: mostly Australian missionaries and their families but including teachers, nurses and other mission

personnel. The visitors were divided into several groups, each of which toured the different circuits of the D'Entrecasteaux to attend local celebrations as far as Tubetube, East Cape and Goodenough Island (see Appendix I for the official programme).

As I have noted, each year on 'Bromilow Day' (19th June), at dozens of mission centres throughout the Papuan region, there are re-enactments of Bromilow's first encounter with indigenous people. On this very special occasion, crowds converged at Dobu Point by the solid, grey-green church and the old, derelict mission house. The nearby wharf and anchorage seethed with small boats and canoes. As the overseas visitors disembarked from the mission boat *Koonawara* a group of painted warriors challenged them from the beach with clubs and spears and theatrical howls, enacting the imagined scene of Bromilow's arrival on the *Lord of the Isles* in 1891. The visitors joined the huge crowd that already surrounded the memorial plinth, sheltered by a massive ancient tree, which marks the sacred site of Bromilow's first service.

It is worth mentioning that the official record of the Jubilee ceremony, held in 1941 on exactly the same spot, is ambiguous concerning whether there was a warriors' challenge on that occasion, and there is no reference to any re-enactment of Bromilow's landing. It is possible, therefore, that this particular tradition had not yet been invented. Some dramatization of 'custom' or 'savagery' did occur, however, though it is not clear to what extent the white visitors (notably Leonard Murray, the Administrator of Papua) were engaged by it, or merely acted the role of passive spectators:

> To add to the pageantry of the scene, a war canoe, laden with warriors in full war-paint and feathers, armed with weapons and war drums escorted the *Laurabada* to its anchorage, accompanying the whaleboat with displays of war-dances and rhythmical drum beats as the Government party disembarked (Hodge 1941).

The writer also indulges the familiar martial trope of the mission when she reminds her readers that the first party of missionaries

had landed at Dobu 'to storm this citadel of darkness and ignorance; and to plant the Standard of Christ…' (ibid.:14).

At 10 am the centenary service began, interspersed with self-congratulatory speeches from ecclesiastics and politicians (see Appendix I for the official programme). Prime Minister Rabbie Namaliu had been invited, though he did not arrive until a few minutes before he was scheduled to speak. With a dramatic flurry of flying sand and furious sound, a Defence Force helicopter landed on the beach. The bemused 'savages' still hovering in that area made half-hearted gestures of challenge with their spears. It is ironic, of course, that the menacing helicopter of 1991 more aptly represented the alien iron ships of 1891 than did the cosily familiar *Koonawara,* not simply because Administrator Sir William MacGregor and his police had provided armed support for Bromilow's party, but because nowadays only helicopters and fighting jets can impress the Dobuan villagers the way their ancestors were impressed by the colonial government fleet. Symbolically, then, Namaliu substituted for the historical Bromilow in the dramatic suddenness of his arrival, although I do not wish to imply that this was intended.

As Prime Minister, Mr Namaliu had contributed 40,000 kina to the celebrations, so there was a real sense in which it was sponsored by the national government as well as by the local United Church (nothing was sought from, nor offered by, the home Church in Australia). Namaliu is from Raluana near Rabaul in East New Britain, where George Brown had established the Methodist Mission in 1875. As he pointed out in his speech, the people of that area had already held their centenary celebrations in 1975, a particularly significant year because it coincided with national independence. He referred also to the forthcoming centennial of the Anglican Church, whose pioneer missionaries arrived on the adjacent mainland coast in August 1891. Namaliu paid tribute to the Churches, rhetorically entwining their grand narrative with that of the nation:

> The history of Papua New Guinea's development and that of the main Churches goes hand in hand. These Churches have played a leading role in our development since the first

> Christian missionaries came to Papua and the other regions. Today we give thanks and remember the work of these missionaries… The Churches were reponsible for the education of whole communities, the provision of health services, the establishment of agriculture [sic] and the development of trade and commerce, and therefore the social and economic progress of the people right up until the post-war period.

Fifty years earlier, it is appropriate to note, it was one of the leading white missionaries of the Dobu area who opened the jubilee proceedings with an address emphasizing 'the harmony and co-operation which had existed between the Government and the Methodist Mission since its inception' (Hodge 1941:15).

In the afternoon of 'Bromilow Day' of 1991 there was traditional dancing and somewhat less traditional canoe racing. But more compulsive viewing was a display of rappelling by six commandos from the hovering helicopter. And next day, when the breeze was favourable, two paratroopers gave a demonstration of skydiving. It was the first time many local people had seen such stunts and they were visibly impressed. These displays of Defence Force commando skills were presumably inserted into the official celebrations by the Prime Minister's advisors (Dobuans could scarcely have conceived of asking for a helicopter to come and entertain them), At that time the PNGDF was under something of a cloud in the national and foreign media due to its heavy-handed tactics in Bougainville, so the display was possibly designed to inject a dose of national morale into the veins of the spectators.

The conflict in Bougainville was obviously on the Prime Minister's mind and he had referred to it at some length during his speech, remarking how he had called upon the Melanesian Council of Churches to pray for a peaceful solution to the 'greatest crisis we have faced since independence'. Mr Namaliu used the spears that Bromilow had faced to develop a fanciful trope. To paraphrase slightly, those spears were for war; yet they were converted by Bromilow to spears of peace.[10]

> Such were the spears we saw today in the re-enactment. Although they signified the first arrival of William Bromilow, today we can still hold them but now we hold them in peace, hold them with the message of God that the spears are no longer dangerous. They are the spears that are helping us to develop our country, helping us to live amicably and peacefully within our own community.

The secular and religious aspects of the trope are here indivisible, and seemingly, the theme of war and peace is as pervasive as it had been a century—or fifty years—ago, though now set in a thoroughly national framework.[11]

June 20th was devoted to a *sagali,* a massive commemorative food distribution. It had been optimistic of the programme organizers to expect it to be completed by noon for it had barely begun by that time and continued throughout the afternoon. A huge platform constructed of wooden posts and planks, 50 feet long and ten feet high, dominated one end of the playing field behind the church. It was flanked by three traditionally decorated yam-houses containing thousands of long yams. Innumerable pigs had been butchered or were lying tied to poles beneath the platform (There was apparently also a *sagali* at the jubilee celebrations, for Hodge refers to a similar raised platform stacked with native food [1941:15]).

Displays of dancing by girls and youths, splendidly decorated in traditional costume and shell finery, preceded the distribution. Bromilow would doubtless have been surprised at the apparent authenticity of the customary dress and dances, for they had been encouraged to lapse under his regime. *Sagali* is an important feature of the majority of Massim societies (Damon and Wagner 1989). It is held periodically to commemorate the collective dead: a postmortuary feast which also confers on the organizers considerable prestige. In this instance, the *sagali* was designed to honour the dead of Bromilow's 'line' as well. Notionally, the gifts are contributed by the matrilineages of the deceased and presented to the deceased's paternal relatives. Obviously, in the present case this was not a practicable rule for many of the recipients, though it was apparently followed with regard to the local missionaries.

The contents of one large decorated yam house was given to the 'Government'. The 'line' of colonial rulers was remembered by the master of ceremonies, though he called only the names of Sir William MacGregor and Sir Hubert Murray. This 'line' was now represented by Mr Namaliu, the Prime Minister, who walked forward to receive a large piece of pork, several decorated yams ('male' and 'female' varieties), a bunch of bananas and another of betel nut, and a bundle of sugar cane. A woven mat and basket were presented to him as personal gifts (and not in his representative capacity, as the food was), and virtually every visitor in fact received a ready-labelled mat or a basket.

The contents of two more yam houses were given to the Anglican and Catholic Churches (both of which are also well established in Milne Bay Province). They would be expected to repay Dobu at future celebrations of their own. Would the government likewise be expected to repay the gifts Mr Namaliu received on its behalf? No, but Dobu would expect some *quid pro quo* in terms of services.

Next, the vegetable food and pigs on the biggest stand of all, the *sagali* platform proper, were distributed over a period of five hours among the missionaries and villagers. Each village or group of visitors had to be given its share of pork and yams, and there were innumerable groups from all over the region. Since the *sagali* was being held to commemorate the dead missionaries from Bromilow onward, the first and principal gifts were to the living missionaries, European or Papuan. The Australians (in the name of Bromilow) got their share of pork, yams, bananas, sugar cane and betel nut. Then the Fijians, Tongans, Samoans and Rotumans who had died in Dobu were remembered, though there was only one Polynesian representative present to accept their gifts. Finally it was the turn of the many native missionaries who had died.

So what began on the previous morning as a celebration of local Christianity with a lengthy outdoor memorial service, concluded with a celebration of *Dobu bubuna* (the very 'Dobuan custom' denounced by Bromilow) in the form of a spectacular food distribution, complete with traditional dancing, oratory, and fierce drumming beneath the food platform to mimic the ancestral spirits

who had invented *sagali*. The Christian narrative of peace and salvation which had been so loudly proclaimed on 19th June had a distinctly pagan echo by the end of the following day. In between, the re-enactment of Bromilow's arrival was—inadvertently or not—ironically upstaged by Namaliu's arrival. The narrative of Christian-meets-and-converts-Pagans became subtly subverted by Namiliu and his martial entourage to read something like Christian-Nationalist-meets-and-indoctrinates-Christian-Citizens.

THOMAS SMAILL (1857–1902)

Smaill was born (the same year as Bromilow) in Edinburgh, Scotland. The following year Smaill's family emigrated to New Zealand, where he was raised and went to university, followed by theological training at the Presbyterian's Otago Theological Hall. In 1889 he was ordained in Dunedin, promptly married, then sailed immediately for the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). A meeting of Synod allocated him a new field in northeast Epi, a large island in the centre of the archipelago. The small offshore island of Lamen (or Lamenu) was Smaill's first choice of site for his station, but its chiefs initially rejected him. The eastern sea-coast welcomed him, however, and he found 'a widely open door'. (The official histories do not mention the Tongoan catechist who had been sent to the Nikaura area several years before by Oscar Michelsen; but then, local conversion narratives do not commemorate him either. He apparently died—or returned to Tongoa—before Smaill arrived on the scene.)

Smaill returned to New Zealand for his wife, and in July of 1890 they landed at Nikaura to begin their ministry. Initially they found themselves amid a residentially dispersed group of intermittently feuding clans. Gradually, people left their hamlets on the coastal ridge and settled directly on the beach beneath the bluff on which Smaill had built his mission house. Smaill was later to describe the demoralized state of Nikaura people on first acquaintance:

> Our people are really very, very poor-deadly poor, in fact. This has resulted from the rapid shrinkage of population during the two or three decades previous to our coming,

> epidemic dysentery, the labour traffic, and disease and tribal wars… During that period and for some time before, the people had been deteriorating rapidly. Knowledge of all kinds lapsed. Canoe-making on the windward side (east Epi) became almost an unknown art, and making and playing of several musical instruments died out… A depressed, hopeless tone, with a tendency to sit about prevailed. Tree-planting ceased. There had not been a couple of dozen cocoanut palms planted in all this district in almost as many years (cited by Miller 1987:386).

In the mission's official hagiography one can discern a gentle, courageous man, of otherwise fairly ordinary gifts, one less ambitious and bigoted than Bromilow, a man who wrote long affectionate letters to his mother and brothers, and who quietly suffered the deaths of two young children. His wife Helen, incidentally, survived him for over fifty years and continued to work on Epi for a long period of her widowhood.

Thomas Smaill died an heroic death twelve years after beginning his ministry on Epi. Missionary historian Graham Miller sums up his achievements thus:

> His immediate goals had been reached. The Church was established, and was providing most of its teachers. The heathen were trooping into worship. The Lamenu outstation was established. The people had a growing vernacular literature. The health of the community had improved (1987: 400).

The death of Smaill has mythical overtones. It is almost an exemplary death, sacrificial and tragic, and the story has passed into local folklore. The following is a composite version of a number I recorded in 1986.

> A woman of Reng injured her leg while working in the gardens. She lay there bleeding and someone sent a message to Mr Smaill. He came on his horse to attend to her. A large splinter had pierced her thigh and Mr Smaill tried to draw it out with his teeth. The men who had gathered to watch were

outraged: he had 'kissed' the woman's inner thigh and seen her 'taboo place'. So they planned to 'poison' him. When he returned from tending her wound next day they lay in wait, One of them threw a coconut, causing his horse to throw him. As he lay on the ground a sorcerer rubbed 'poison' leaves on his body and pierced his head with orange tree thorns. Then they helped him back onto his horse and he rode off towards Nikaura. He rapidly grew weak and fell from his horse again. Mrs Smaill had prepared lunch and was beginning to worry about him. She sent an old man down to the village to find him. In the distance he could see Mr Smaill approaching, but he was leading his horse and staggering. The old man helped him into the saddle and guided him up the hill. His wife put him to bed. He felt weak and sick and told his wife to send someone to fetch Mr Frater, the missionary on Paama Island. A while later he asked, 'Can you see the boat coming?' 'Not yet,' was the reply. Later he asked again. 'Can you see the boat?' 'Yes, it's outside the reef.' Later still he asked, 'Is the boat here yet?' 'It's pulling into the shore now/ But it was too late. Thomas Smaill's breath had finished.

Although more mundane, the official version is no less tragic:

An urgent message reached the mission station. A woman had fallen from a tree and sustained internal injuries. Snatching up his medical kit Smaill set off at once. He arrived at the village of Rhengi about midnight, wet through and exhausted. He attended to the woman's injuries. Having failed to bring a change of clothes he simply lay down in the hut and waited for the dawn. He was then in the grip of malarial fever. He had the greatest difficulty in reaching home and was then in a state of collapse… [A week later]… Mrs Smaill, who was also ill, sent an urgent call to the Fraters on Paama, carried by the Nikaura whaleboat. The Fraters left next morning… They took nine hours to reach Nikaura, fighting head winds and tide. As the boat entered the bay Smaill died. Malaria turned to blackwater (Miller 1987:401–2).[12]

'It was here,' wrote Frater on a later visit to Nikaura, 'that Thomas Smaill and his like-minded wife lived their great life of self-sacrificing love; and it was here that Thomas Smaill laid down his life for the people of Epi' (quoted by Don 1918:37). The official view of Smaill is also inscribed on a brass tablet in the stone church of Lamenu: 'He gave his life for the regeneration of the people of these islands.' Small wonder then that the people of Nikaura and neighbouring villages liken their missionary to Jesus Christ, the Saviour whom their forefathers killed in their ignorance.

NIKAURA: 100 YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHERN EPI

Epi Island is geographically, culturally, and linguistically differentiated, such that different parts were evangelized at different times: the south by the Presbyterians in 1879, the west in 1880 (after an abortive attempt by the London Missionary Society in 1861), and as we have seen, the northeast in 1890 when Smaill came to the previously neglected Lewo-speaking area. The half-century following Smaill's death in 1902 saw a further decline in population and a corresponding neglect by both mission and government. It was not until the late fifties that the fortunes of Epi, 'Island of the Lost' (as missionary historian Graham Miller rhetorically designated it), began to turn.

Today Nikaura, a community of 180 people grouped into several small patriclans, is a thriving and rapidly modernizing village, with a redroofed church, a large primary school, and an imposingly sturdy *nakamal* (men's house). Nikaura, the community created by Smaill's effective presence, is the largest of seven Lewo-speaking villages strung along the rocky coast. Together they comprise a single council-area-cum-parish called Varsu, which also boasts its own council of chiefs, established soon after the independence of Vanuatu was declared in 1980.

For three days in early July, 1990, Nikaura played host to about a thousand visitors to commemorate a century of Christianity. A Centenary Celebration Committee had been formed of several local pastors, deacons and elders belonging to the two council areas and

parishes of northeast Epi (Varsu) and Lamen Island (Varmali). People raised money by holding fetes and donated their services for the construction of stalls, toilets and temporary housing for visitors. A new path was cleared up the hill to Mael, the site of Thomas Smaill's mission house and lonely grave.

Invited guests included a large New Zealand contingent. They were all members of the Presbyterian Church led by the Reverend Graham Horwell and his wife, who had served for 20 years at Lamen Island from 1940. There were also a number of nursing sisters and the builder of Nikaura church and Vaemali hospital; the latter is several kilometers to the north, midway between between Nikaura and Lamen. Ni-Vanuatu guests included an official delegation of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu from Port Vila led by the Moderator, the Clerk of Assembly, and the Moderator of the Central Islands Presbytery. Two local members of parliament attended though neither played a prominent role in the celebrations.

To give a concise indication of the breadth and complexity of the three-day celebrations, I reproduce in Appendix II the mimeographed programme devised by the Centenary Committee. I shall focus here on the main events of the morning of 3rd July, the day devoted to the commemoration of Smaill's landing. In truth, as many Church officials well knew, Smaill had made his first brief exploratory visit a year earlier, in July 1889, but this event is conflated with the 'formal' commencement of his ministry marked by his arrival on the *Dayspring* on 3rd July 1890. On the occasion of his second landing Smaill was accompanied by his wife, by several other missionaries and their families (most of whom were bound for other islands), and by an itinerant Scottish professor, Henry Drummond, who (fortunately for posterity) kept a vivid travel diary. He recorded, for instance, that after the dining table was landed they had all sat down for lunch on the beach:

> Awful crowd of savages surrounded us as we ate. Never saw white ladies before probably, nor plates, knives and forks. Every man (50 at least) stark naked except for infinitesimal strip between the legs, turned into a bark belt back and front. Women wear a scanty loin cloth of bark. All armed,

> mostly rifles cocked. Several had bows with sheaves of poisoned arrows… No cloth here; everything native except guns (Smaill n.d.).

That night, 'full moon, surf roaring', Drummond noted a native 'confab' on the beach: 'Now Misi come; no more war; all change now. Sing-sing tomorrow, kill pig, dance.' This is almost too good to be true, and one wonders if Drummond's hearing was impaired by wishful thinking; but it was prescient of him nonetheless to observe that the people would 'Celebrate the end of heathenism and arrival of missionary'. He gives as the reason: 'Real object is to make an end of war… Many murders on the beach and cannibal feasts. Notorious district. All cannibals here, and armed/ This is precisely the representation of themselves that has been endorsed, assimilated and carried into the present by Epi islanders. And although Drummond was not strictly accurate in his prediction that 'Land next year and probably there will not be a weapon on the shore,' it is fair image of a Hobbesian state of Warre about to be transformed.

From the same beach precisely one hundred years later a group of Nikaura men advanced towards the church. This was to be the 'Welcome of Concert & Singing' promised by the official programme. At 9.30 am the church grounds were full of people. The overseas and local invited guests (who had had their necks draped with leis of frangipani) were seated under a plastic awning. The man from Radio Vanuatu was checking his equipment in the church, and four custom chiefs were sitting on a bench by the church door discussing the trussed pig that lay under a nearby mango tree. A conchshell blast heralded the arrival of the men from the beach. They choreographed the moving outline of the masted *Dayspring*. On nearing the church precincts the boat halted and an imaginary anchor was thrown. White-shirted Thomas Smaill (impersonated by a local primary schoolteacher) was rowed ashore by a young male villager pulling on imaginary oars, and he stepped onto the imaginary sands of Lekevi. Holding a large black bible under his arm, Thomas Smaill approached a worried cluster of natives, the men armed with clubs and spears and wearing bunches of leaves over their shorts, the women with leaf-fronds

slung over their Mother Hubbard dresses. They backed away from him nervously, the men clutching their weapons tightly. Some gestured to him to leave, but the chief Varasia (played by a church elder) reached out cautiously and took the missionary's outstretched hand. He then led Smaill from place to place around the churchyard. Another elder gave a commentary over the loudspeaker, explaining that Mister Smaill was being shown various sites on the coastal ridge. Finally Smaill signified assent He approved of the bluff above Nikaura and would purchase it for his mission. The people still seemed fearful, and the women in particular wished him gone. But Mister Smaill drew them all into a large circle around him and prayed.[13]

The re-enactment of Smaill's first landing over, Nikaura's string band ('Eastern Country Boys') sang the Lewo version of their song about the arrival, ministry and death of Mr Smaill. It had helped them win the String Band Competition the previous afternoon. The song makes it perfectly explicit that Smaill died a sacrificial death. The elder with the microphone glossed the singers' lines over the loudspeaker: *Thomas Smaill emi ded…emi ded from yumi… long olgeta sin blong yumi, emi mekem olsem we Jisas Krais long kros* (Thomas Smaill is dead, dead because of you and me, because of all our sins; this makes him like Jesus Christ on the cross). Thus, nicely joined to the dramatized re-enactment of Smaill's landing in 1889 was this musical interpretation of the significance of his death as an Imitation of Christ.[14]

The crowd now stood while the flags of Church and State were raised. Schoolchildren sang the national anthem while the leading Nikaura custom chief raised the national flag and a senior church elder from Lamen Island raised the flag of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. Members of the New Zealand delegation then delivered messages of goodwill from the mother Church. Mr Horwell spoke about the *pikinini* (child) Church that has now grown up and become an equal of the New Zealand Church: the relationship between them is now one of partnership not dependence. As chief representative of the missionaries, Mr Horwell talked about co-operation. It had begun here on the very day that Mr Smaill had come ashore and was assisted by *man ples* (local

men), who carried the timber for his house up the hill. Local people had co-operated with *Misi* and willingly helped him to found the mission. Epi had been redeemed.

Several speakers, New Zealander and ni-Vanuatu, recapitulated the tragic history of Epi—the devastation wrought by diseases, alcohol, labour recruitment, the theft of land by French colonials, and the internecine killing by guns and *nakaimas* sorcery—all leading to the rapid decline in its population, from 8000 to 1000 within fifty years. Even the British hadn't thought it worth providing a hospital for the few people who remained. The mission fought hard for it, however, and in 1957 Vaemali was built. A reversal in the island's fortunes began, and today the population is growing steadily. Thanks to God (and by implication no thanks at all to the Condominium government) we can now truly say: 'Epi is a land of the living'. The role of Vaemali hospital in this rhetoric is strengthened by the fact that Vaemali means 'to bring back to life'.

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu then unveiled the memorial stone and spoke about 'Epi for Christ'. The memorial is a reminder of Thomas Smaill's work of love, and from that hill above came help for the people who lived in darkness. 'He laid down his life for the people of Epi. But the past is not dead, and Smaill's work is still bearing fruit. The lost people of Epi are now living/ He quoted professor Drummond's prophetic words overheard on the beach: 'Now Misi come; no more war; all change now. Sing-sing tomorrow, kill pig, dance.'

The unveiling of the memorial stone was linked to another commemoration, for the old Parish of Lamenu and northeast Epi was to be divided, and on this day the new parishes were officially declared. The Moderator of the Central Islands Presbytery dedicated the two stones which were to represent the new parishes of Varmali and Varsu (aptly, *var-* means 'stone'). The two Moderators placed the stones into prepared holes in front of Smaill's memorial.

It was then the turn of the custom chiefs to play their part in the dedication of the new parishes and council areas (though this had not been indicated in the mimeographed programme). Three local chiefs wearing 'traditional' leaf skirts over their shorts stood in

front of the memorial stone. One represented the Varsu council area and parish, another Varmali, and the third Varmaul. Protocol decreed that each chief held the club before the first chief wielded it to kill the pig by several blows to the head; it was thereby symbolically a shared killing.

A senior representative of Tarpumamwele, the Epi Council of Chiefs (convened for the first time in about 1984), explained the meaning of Tarpumamwele in his speech: *tarpuma,* a bundle of cordyline leaves symbolizing law, and *mwele,* a palm leaf symbolizing peace. Together they symbolize the protection of customary law and the authority of chiefs to impose peace. Hence today, he said (in a sideways leap of logic) they also stand for the authority of the Bible.

Next there was the presentation of personal gifts of mats, baskets and carvings. The senior pastor announced the names of recipients—in a prearranged protocol of rank order—and a senior chief presented them. That evening, in a last gesture of fellowship, the missionary party and other invited guests ate together with villagers outside the men's house. The visitors left by truck the next morning after lining up so that the entire community could walk past them and, one by one, shake their hands.

Had *Misi* indeed been able to descend the hill and observe the celebration held in his name he would have remarked many changes to the Nikaura that he knew in 1900. In addition to the size, structure and lay-out of the village (with its several public buildings and neat 'streets' bordered by flowering plants), and in addition to the colourful clothes, the abundance of healthy children, the revival of serious nightly kavadrinking, he would have noticed something unusual about the way the celebrations were conducted. Their organization was entirely in the hands of ni-Vanuatu. With the single exception of his own missionary heir and fellow-countryman, Graham Horwell, the dozen or so Europeans present played very minor roles in the event. Clearly, they were no longer in charge. On the back of the white T-shirts which bore his (misspelled) name as a logo, he would have seen an unfamiliar flag and read that 1990 was, in addition to the centenary of his arrival, the tenth birthday of Vanuatu—a name quite unknown to him. It

was a happy coincidence that 90 years after his arrival the New Hebrides should be reborn as an independent nation of the South Pacific, and he would easily deduce that the Church, too, was independent and no longer ruled from New Zealand or Australia, and that the Whites who were present at his celebration were not in Nikaura by right of conquest, nor by virtue of a presumed spiritual superiority, but simply as guests and equals.

WHOSE NARRATIVE?

This way of describing the relationship of the past to the present (by the medium of a dead missionary hero's imagined memories) is also a form of narrative. It might even be read as a naively optimistic national narrative for Vanuatu that celebrates the Presbyterian Church. But this is my own (mildly ironic) version of the narratives of others, a reflection which prompts one to ask: whose celebrations were these and to whom were they addressed? The simplest answer is that since local people of Varsu funded, organized and controlled them, they were wholly theirs for their own consumption. But it is relevant to note that the initiative for the centenary had come from a pastor (from another village in Varsu) who had risen high in the ranks of the national Presbyterian Church. Left to their own devices, one wonders whether Nikaura villagers would have celebrated Smaill's centennial to the lavish extent that they did.

There were at least three levels of narrative at work in this commemorative celebration: the local (village or council area), the provincial (island or Presbytery) and the national. Each interpenetrated to some degree, yet each was also discrete, with its own tropes, discourse and presumptive audience. At the local level, the missionary hero loomed largest, notably in Nikaura where Smaill was assimilated to the role of Christ-the-Saviour and the community who 'killed' him to the role of the ungrateful Jews or Romans. As in Bwaidoka, the people of Nikaura (and Varsu more generally) were claiming their Jesus in the guise of a white missionary from afar who came to save them from themselves. Epi people emphatically do not accept the role cast for them in the history books of passive victims of white perfidy. They do not see

their forebears as innocent victims of the blackbirders and land-hungry colonials who introduced guns and lethal diseases (including sexually-transmitted ones which caused infertility), and who peddled poisonous grog to the demoralized remnants. Epi people assert their own responsibility for their depopulation by stressing the interminable revenge-killings by firearms and *nakaimas* sorcery, particularly the latter, which became emblematic of Epi's notoriety in other islands.

Likewise, they killed their missionary before accepting his Word. This interpretation, of course, is not accepted by the wider Church, and the office-bearers I discussed it with were uncomfortable with its blasphemous implications. No, Smaill had died of blackwater fever not sorcery; and no, he was not to be identified so literally with the Saviour. Yet the force of the local narrative of Christian faith stems in large part from this proud assertion that they 'sacrificed' their missionary hero, and Nikaura people regard themselves as 'special' because of their heathenish role in killing the man sent by God to save them. It adds immeasurably to their identity, and they celebrate this distinction in songs, both traditional and modern, in dance (as I have witnessed) as well as in legendary narrative. In short, they want to believe it, and insist on it as a necessary part of their Christian ideology and their identity as a community.

At the island or Presbytery level the narrative is more orthodox. In simple form it runs: after several decades of colonial contact, Epi was doomed; Smaill, his fellow missionaries and their successors (including Graham Horwell) saved it and brought it back to life. Vaemali hospital played an essential part in this process, and as a local symbol of revitalization (if not of literal resurrection) the hospital is crucially important in this Epi-wide Christian narrative. (We might note in passing the analogy with the Bwaidokan narrative concerning their salvation through *tolama,* 'those who save…').

Mingling with this mission-inspired narrative is one of government by chiefs and area councils (the latter symbolized by the stones planted around Smaill's memorial); the chiefs represented both area councils and local parishes of the island.

Horwell's speech on 'co-operation' between missionary and villagers, Church and people, alluded to this joining of secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Even more significant was the Tarpumamwele chief's extrapolation of the 'traditional' symbols of chiefly authority to the authority of the Bible, for this can be understood as an instantiation of the assimilation of *kastom* to Christianity.

Of the national level of representational narrative, we observed only the stock symbols of flag and anthem (both of which incorporate Christian imagery). But of course there was one that can be described as mediating all of the narratives, namely Bislama (Vanuatu pidgin), one of the three national languages of Vanuatu. This was the principal means of communication used throughout the centenary event (as indeed it is the preferred language of all public events in Epi). I estimated that at least one third of the people who attended the centenary did not speak Lewo (the vernacular), whereas without exception everyone understood Bislama.The Radio Vanuatu announcer (a man from Malekula) who recorded many of the speeches, songs and services of the Nikaura celebrations himself broadcasts almost entirely in Bislama, and the subsequent broadcasts of the centenary (relayed nationally on several evenings of the following week) were all in Bislama. If it was listening, the nation heard a good deal about Mr Smaill the week after his centenary.

COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In making any comparison between the Dobu and Nikaura centenary celebrations it must be acknowledged that we are dealing first and foremost with differences of scale, not only of the events themselves but also of their national contexts. Although representing only 4% of the total population of Papua New Guinea, Milne Bay Province is approximately the same size as Vanuatu, both in terms of its population (about 150,000 in 1990) and the number and size of its inhabited islands. However, although precise figures are hard to come by it is safe to say that Milne Bay Province is far from being Vanuatu's equal in wealth. It is one of the poorest Papua New Guinea provinces (with a per

capita income of less than US$300 in the mid-eighties), whereas Vanuatu's nationhood gives it an immense economic advantage as a recipient of foreign aid (this alone amounted to US$256 per capita in 1989 of a total GNP per capita of US$860). Historically, it might be noted that Western intervention in eastern Papua was less traumatic than it had been in the then New Hebrides, that the region suffered less depopulation and less appropriation of land by foreigners. Colonial history began some twenty to thirty years later in eastern Papua and ended (officially with independence) five years earlier than it did in the New Hebrides.

I do not need to dwell on the thematic similarities of the respective centenaries, despite their differences in scale and local salience. Dobu's was by far the larger, more complex event, and it was attended by many more local people and overseas visitors. It also cost a great deal more and was funded to a much greater extent by outside (mainly national government) sources. Dobu also attracted no less a personage than the Prime Minister, who with his helicopter and Defence Force displays gave much greater political clout to the proceedings. One might claim that this commemoration proved a useful vehicle for the propagation of national sentiment, and that it was even appropriated for nationalist ends—none more blatant than Mr Namaliu's airing of a national political crisis from a missionary hero's platform.

By comparison, Nikaura's centenary was a parochial and relatively apolitical affair, for no politicians of ministerial level attended. National sentiments were largely in abeyance, though they were tacitly acknowledged in the ceremonial showing of the flag and the singing of the anthem. Yet the nation was implicitly present in the *lingua franca* of Bislama, and rather more explicitly celebrated on the backs of the commemorative T-shirts, which, at a symbolic level unintended by the designers, had the flag of the nation riding on the back of the cross of the Church which decorated the front!

Comparing the two missionary heroes, we may note that Smaill's ministry was shorter than Bromilow's and did not reach as far; he died before he could fully—as the familiar trope has it—reap the Christian harvest he had sown. Smaill became a more

homely and intimately mythical figure, not simply because he died in the field and at a younger age than Bromilow, but rather because 'his' people believe they were directly responsible for his death. In the simple words of a Nikaura *kastom* song (sung while seated women rhythmically clap coconut shells on the ground): 'Who-killed-Misi? We-did!' In local perception, Smaill's sacrificial death assimilated him to a mythical pattern of Christhood in a narrative which became vital to Nikaura's kastom-within-Christian identity. This kind of apotheosis was denied Bromilow who returned home to die a peaceful death in Australia.

People evidently do need heroes. The problem is to find and keep them. Local ones are being eclipsed as social boundaries expand and traditional ways are eroded by modernization and global culture. Those parochial culture heroes who do remain, while too closely identified with their natal groups to be candidates for hero-status beyond their immediate communities, may sometimes become the focus of cult movements or independent churches. But their future as such is inevitably contested and uncertain. Likewise, modern political leaders are occasionally heroicized by their followers, but their careers are evanescent and the taint of corruption often follows them into obscurity (Namaliu was to lose office and resign from Parliament within a year of the event recorded here). Among the best candidates for heroicization, then, in rural Christian communities at least, are pioneer missionaries. The fact that a majority of them were Europeans, members of an oppressive colonial order, seems to matter rather less than one might expect (In the case of Nikaura, it is the New Zealander Smaill who is commemorated as a hero, not the niVanuatu catechist who had been sent there some years before him).

If commemorations of missionary heroes can be construed in any way as 'narrating the nation' then they are in a markedly Christian key, with the affirmation of a Christian as distinct from national identity the principal aim. It is also a Christian identity that crosses national boundaries to merge with a regional or even Pan-Pacific identity (though the people who attend regional Church congresses do not usually include many 'grassroots'

delegates). Moreover, one is likely to find that at the village, island, or even provincial level such narratives are too fragmentary, idiosyncratic or particularistic to 'add up' to any master narrative valid for the nation as a whole. It would be preposterous to imagine, perhaps, a single missionary hero who is celebrated by the entire nation like some stranger king. What we can easily imagine, however, is a multitude of local Christian narratives such as these of a Bromilow or a Smaill being stitched into a larger, and forever unfinished, national fabric.

Against this view, one may propose that insofar as national narratives are created and propagated by an educated urban elite, there might be some resistance to the universalizing Christian message. Nor is that message always perceived as universalizing when it meets intransigent tribal or ethnic boundaries. The fact that there is now a wide diversity of Christian sects in the Melanesian nations, each with its own doctrinal spin on the theme of salvation, means there cannot be any single and simple master narrative acceptable to everyone. Although these narrative strands may appear to be 'saying' broadly similiar things, the scope for contention over details of belief and practice is almost infinite.

It is a common observation that the colonial state did not penetrate as deeply and as effectively into the villages of the Western Pacific as the missions and Churches, whose successes, generally speaking, have far exceeded those of any governmental agency. The missions were able to govern and to provide the services—of health and education in particular—in a manner which ensured their prominence after independence. The successor states of the colonial era have inherited this incomplete penetration into rural, provincial or peripheral areas. Notably in Papua New Guinea today the state is actually on the retreat in many parts of the country, providing fewer services and making fewer demands on its citizens than did the colonial state. In such circumstances of weak state penetration the Church (and to a lesser degree other nongovernmental organizations) remains dominant in everyday matters of village life. To a corresponding degree, the entrenched doctrines of Christianity as unifying forces are more salient than the newer ideologies of nationalism.

In short, the missionary hero lives! If ever Melanesian nations acquire their own, fully-independent television networks with the financial and technical capacity to create and broadcast their own programmes, I'll wager there will be soap operas about generic missionaries who land on generic islands to confront and convert generic hordes of savages.

APPENDIX I

United Church - Papuan Islands Region
Centenary programme, Friday 14 to Thursday 20 June

FRI.14th.

Visitors arrive at Salamo and then travel to Circuit Groups around the region.

SAT.15th.

Visitors go to Circuits and Sections and spend the weekend in different villages.

Visitors follow Circuit Programmes.

SUN.16th.

1. Visitors follow Circuit Programmes and join the Sunday Worship in the various Congregations.
2. Visitors return to the Circuit Groups Headquarters.
3. Visitors in the Dobu Circuit Group return to Salamo in the afternoon.
4. Visitors in the Bwaiowa Villages and at Esa'ala remain in their respective places until 20 June.

MON.17th.

1. Visitors residing in the Bwaiowa Villages, Esa'ala, Gomwa and Begasi go to Salamo in the morning for the Monday Celebration Programme (see below).
2. Visitors from Bwaruda return to Salamo.

TUES.18th.

Same as Monday 17th.

WED.19th.: 'The Bromilow Day'

6.00 am-7.00 am	Visitors leave their residing places for Dobu Island.
8.00 am-9.30 am	1. Canoes with traditional dancers meet the boats and lead them to the Dobu beach. 2. Welcome on the beach at Dobu.
10.00 am-12.00 pm	Bromilow Memorial Service under the kwakwamo tree on the Dobu Point.
12.00 pm-1.00 pm	Lunch
1.00 pm-2.00 pm	Sky Diving
2.00 pm-3.30 pm	Speeches and Greetings and Exchange of Gifts.
5.00 pm-6.00 pm	Combine Dinner
7.30 pm-9.00 pm	Service and Choirs

THURS.20th.

6.00 am-7.00 am	Thanksgiving Service
7.00 am-8.00 am	Breakfast
7.30 am-11.00 am	Feast (Sagali)
12.00 pm-1.00 pm	Lunch
1.30 pm	Farewell

Order of the Bromilow Memorial Service

Wednesday 19th June, 1991 on Dobu Island

1. Procession
2. Re-enactment of the arrival of Dr W.E.Bromilow on Dobu on 19th June, 1891
3. Call to Worship
4. Choir: 'Eaubada 'ada tolema'
5. Welcome
6. Hymn: No.285
7. History of the Methodist Church and its work in the Papuan Islands
8. Choir: 'Wedilia Sinabwana'
9. History and the Work of the United Church in the Papuan Islands
10. Prayer of Thanksgiving
11. Choir: 'Tonidoe wa 'itaita'
12. Prime Minister's speech

13.
    a) Choir: 'Gosemao wa da tooro'
    b) Free-will Offering (Ebwayadaita)

14. Blessing of the Offerings
15. Bible Readings: Nugana (Genesis) 3:13–15
    Yoni (John) 17:6–19
    E'itaita (Revelation) 2:8–11
16. Sermon
17. Hymn: No.258
18. Benediction

APPENDIX II

Epi-Lamenu Centenary Programme
1st—3rd July 1990

SUNDAY 1st July 1990

2.00 pm	Gather at the front of Rev Thomas Smaill Memorial Church.
	Welcome speech: Chairman of the Centenary Committee.
3.00 pm	Official Opening: Moderator of C.I. Presbytery.
3.15 pm	Combine and Holy Communion Service in Rev Thomas Smaill Church: Pastor George Aki.
5.00 pm	Custom Dance: Varsu Men.
6.00 pm	Tea.
7.00 pm	Video Show.
12.00 am	End of Programme.

MONDAY 2nd July 1990

8.00 am	Open Air Service: Pastor Varsu.
8.30 am	Custom Dance: Varmali Men.
	Education—talk & display.
	Health—talk & display.
	Religious—translation, talk & display.
12.00 pm	Lunch.
1.30 pm	Football Semi-Final.
	Volleyball Semi-Final.
2.30 pm	Custom Dance: Women, Two Areas.
	Arts & Craft Show.
3.00 pm	String Band Competition.
4.00 pm	Choir Competition.
6.00 pm	Tea.

7.00 pm Concert.
12.00 am End of Programme.

TUESDAY 3rd July 1990: Centenary Official Day

8.00 am	Public Assembly at Memorial Stone Ground.
8.30 am	SDA Pathfinder March On.
9.30 am	Arrival of PCV Moderator & Invited Guests.
	Welcome of Concert & Singing.
	Flag-raising: Church Flag & National Flag.
	National Anthem: School Children.
	Prayer: Pastor AoG.
10.00 am	Speeches:
	Welcome & History (Custom Chief).
	Public Address (Ps George Aki).
	Church History (PCV Clerk).
	Guest Speaker (Rep. of the First Missionary).
11.00 am	Dedication of Memorial Stone: PCV Moderator.
	Dedication of 3 Parishes: CI Presbytery Moderator.
	Presentation: Chairman of Committee.
	Choir: Composed about First Missionary.
	Prayer: Pastor SDA.
12.00 pm	Centenary Special Table: Guests.
2.00 pm	Football Final.
	Volleyball Final.
3.00 pm	Prize Giving:
	Choir Competition.
	String Band Competition.
	Football & Volleyball.
	Arts & Craft Show.
6.00 pm	Tea.
7.00 pm	Video Show.
12.00 am	End of Programme.

NOTES

1. Cf. Langmore (1974) on Chalmers; Wetherell (1977) on Maclaren, King and Abel; Gewertz and Errington (1993) on Brown; Facey (1988) on Milne.
2. Connerton usefully characterizes commemorative ceremonies as rituals ('mnemonic devices') which 'explicitly refer to prototypical persons and events, whether these are understood to have a historical or a mythological existence'. Their distinctive feature is 'ritual *re-enactment*…a quality of cardinal importance in the shaping of communal memory' (1989:61).
3. Geoffrey White's recent book (1992) is a welcome exception which considers in great detail the 'conversion narratives' and 'conversion dramas' of Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands. The dramatizations or 'skits' of first missionary contacts that White describes are exceptionally elaborate: one *thukma* production, for instance, lasted forty-five minutes and involved about 50 performers (ibid.:148). A recent article by Errington and Gewertz (1994) examines the historically changing 'play frame' of Duke of York Islanders' re-enactments of the advent of George Brown in 1875. There are many points of similarity with the present essay, though Errington and Gewertz focus more on local audience response to the dramatizations than I am able to do here. They have the benefit of far more detailed reportage on the Duke of York's Golden Jubilee ceremonies of 1925 than are available for Dobu's Jubilee of 1941.
4. It so happens that, with the conspicuous exception of Trobriand Islanders, the peoples of eastern Papua were indeed practising cannibals at the time of missionary contact. But note Thomas's persuasive claim that the European image of the cannibal was appropriated reactively by Pacific Islanders; and since it was 'one that empowered savagery while placing it outside European sociality, we should not be surprised that the 'savages' so rapidly seized upon the image themselves' (1992:219).
5. Bromilow's 'sacred site' in Bwaidoka is a decorated, shrine-like, roofed enclosure containing a stone inscribed with these words: DR.W.E.BROMILOW STOOD ON THIS STONE AND PLANTED THE FIRST SEEDS OF CHRISTIANITY ON GOODENOUGH ISLAND.
6. In Santa Isabel, however, chiefs were crucial in their mediating role as those who first accepted Christianity. Hence, 'the prototypic conversion story depicts a first encounter between a missionary and a well-known ancestor chief (White 1992:159). Such chiefs now share heroic status with the white missionaries.

7. The 'warrior challenge' motif of dramatizations of first-contact is probably ubiquitous in the Pacific, not only in mission-inspired re-enactments as described here, but also in what are usually called in the Solomons and Vanuatu *kastam welkam* (e.g. White 1992:233). Whenever VIPs or other special guests arrive at a place for some kind of formal celebration, the welcome of the hosts involves a noisy display of challenge and threat, followed by conciliation, the exchange of gifts and speechmaking. In Vanuatu at least they are highly standardized and reveal only minor differences of detail between one island and another. *Kastam welkam* would appear to be one of the 'generic' cultural practices that have spread throughout the Pacific in recent generations.
8. Dobu society gained anthropological notoriety with the publication of Reo Fortune's classic, *Sorcerers of Dobu,* though his fieldwork was in fact conducted on Tewara, a smaller, then pagan island some miles to the north of Dobu.
9. This point was perceptively made by Tony Syme (1985) in an unpublished BA Honours thesis.
10. Bromilow also claimed in his autobiography to have 'converted' a Dobuan war canoe into a vessel of peace (1929:chap.VIII); see my analysis of this trope in Young 1980.
11. Although no one referred to the jubilee celebrations in 1991, they had been over-shadowed by the imminence of a real war: the Japanese were to invade Milne Bay six months later. Even so, on that occasion about 3000 Papuans were estimated to be present. In the centenary speeches fifty years later, another neglected aspect of Methodist Church history in the region was the precipitate evacuation (or 'desertion', depending on one's narrator) of the Australian missionaries when the Japanese began their advance. In the absence of European leadership, local Papuans found themselves in control of their own Church. Although they were to surrender it two years later when the white missionaries returned, nothing would be the same again: 'In the 60s there was a rapid and successful propulsion of Papuans into all leadership positions' (Mackay 1992:43).
12. Miller's principal source for this redaction is Maurice Frater (n.d.: 243ff) who buried Smaill the day after arriving from Paama too late to save him.
13. Compare this re-enactment on Epi with the more richly dramatized *bena boli* performance on Santa Isabel (White 1992:146ff). Coincidentally, just as Thomas Smaill was landing at Nikaura in July 1890, the Anglican missionary Dr Henry Welchman was about to have his 'epic encounter' in the mountains with the Isabel 'bush' chief Figrima (White ibid.:157).

14. The Bislama (Vanuatu pidgin) version of this song included the following verses (my translation):

Long 1890 oli bin sakemaot	In 1890 they threw away
Daknes long ples blong yumi	The darkness of our place
Laet emi kamtru	The light arrived
Long stasen long Varsu	In the villages of Varsu
Yumi hapi we kasem tudei	We are happy until today
Yumi liv long niupela laef	We live our new lives
Long 1902 oli bin kilim misi	In 1902 they killed the missionary
Long kastom lif blong yumi	With our native sorcery
We emi kam long takemaot	Which he came to remove
'Mi lusim hom	'I lost my home
Be mi putim laet finis	But I brought the light
We bambae i stap	Which will continue
I olsem memori blong mi'	As my memorial'

CHAPTER FIVE
Woman-Nation-State in Vanuatu: Women as Signs and Subjects in the Discourses of *Kastom,* Modernity and Christianity

Margaret Jolly

INTRODUCTION

The conjugation of nation and state is already a problematic relation. Adding woman to this conjugation, presents not so much a marriage but a troika of terms restlessly pulling in different directions. Deniz Kandiyoti (1991a) has evoked the contradictory character of nation-state formation in postcolonial societies. On the one hand it appears as a 'modern project that melts and transforms traditional attachments in favour of new identities', on the other hand it calls for 'a reaffirmation of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a communal past' (1991a:431). This Janus face between modernist transformations and archaist reaffirmations was arguably present in the formation of nation-states and citizen-subjects in Europe. Creating Italians or French from the congeries of regional identities, required a modernist eclipsing and at times a forcible suppression of regional identities and languages but it also entailed archaist redrawings, a culling from the depths of an imagined past community an allegedly more authentic national boundary for cultural differences.

In the colonial context, this tension between modernist projects in the name of freedom, democracy or development and nationalist recuperation in the name of earlier or original traditions is even more profound and more contested. Nationalism in postcolonial societies has to negotiate the Western origin of Enlightenment and progressionist values—the promise of enfranchisement, emancipation and more recently 'development'

(see Chatterjee 1986). But at the same time, nationalist political elites have to establish their credentials as anti-colonial and antiWestern, by denying the cultural hegemony of the West and by legitimations based on claims of authentic cultural difference and past identities (Hau'ofa 1987, Keesing 1989).

Women often stand at the centre of such contestations. Nation-states emergent from erstwhile colonies often proclaim the emancipation of women as part of the project of independence or national liberation (Chatterjee 1989, Jayawardena 1988). Women are often not just signs but subjects in such nationalist struggles, if not as freedom fighters on the Burmese-Thai border (Lwyn 1994), then as modest militants fighting to walk with Gandhi on his Salt March. Women's contribution to nationalist causes both as active subjects and as signs may be acknowledged after the fight is won in the constitutional rhetoric of 'freeing' women or even in emancipatory practices—like giving women the vote, abolishing *sati,* tearing the veil.[1] But women's place in the narrative of nation is rarely linear. So the story goes—Nasser gave Egyptian women the vote but soon after outlawed feminist organizations as 'foreign-inspired' (Kandiyoti 1991a; see also Badran 1991). Often reasserting authenticity and traditionalism against accusations of undue Western influence has meant drastic compromises rather than promises of 'freedom' to women as citizens.

Kandiyoti illustrates this process poignantly for the Middle East and South Asia—two regions of the world where anti-colonial nationalisms have been strongest (1991a, 1991b). Here in different ways women have been central both in modernizing and secularizing state formations and in authenticating religious communalism or nationalism. In the unfortunate words of one commentator, in Turkey the unveiled woman was as powerful a sign of modernity as a tractor (ibid. 1991a:432). And the veiling of women in Turkey, in Iran, in Algeria, has constituted an equally powerful sign of anti-Western, anti-secularist, even anti-modernist assertions of cultural and religious difference, although it has recently been argued for Malaysia that veiling is a part of a Muslim/Malay modern, especially on the part of educated middle class women (Stivens n.d.). Women of course have been active

participants in many anti-colonial struggles thoughout the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia. So in India we witness not just the mother goddess as anti-colonial symbol in masculine movements against the British but also the mobilization of both elite and low caste women as subjects in nationalist and subaltern political struggles (Sangari and Vaid 1989, *Economic and Political Weekly* 1990, Sem 1993, Tharpar 1993, Jolly 1994c).

The nation-states which have emerged in the Pacific are both more recent and more fragile and although they have been associated with an anti-Western or decolonizing ethos this has not been so pronounced nor so pervasive as in South Asia or the Middle East. Still there is a tension between the promise of equality as citizens in a developing nation and those appeals to the authenticity of the nation-state, legitimized by appeals to *kastom* or tradition. Women are here too at the centre of this contest between the emancipatory promises of 'modernity' and the authenticating claims of 'tradition'. I will explore this tension in Vanuatu, but try to situate this in a broader regional and global frame. But, first a few words about the emergence of the nation-state in Vanuatu before I consider women's relation to it.

VANUATU: FROM INDIGENOUS TO INDEPENDENCE POLITICS

Vanuatu is a small group of islands, 1700 kilometers distant from the eastern coast of Australia, with a population probably now approaching 170,000 people, 97% of whom are indigenes or ni-Vanuatu.[2] As in most of the Pacific there was no indigenous state. Indigenous forms of economy were based on root crop horticulture, pig breeding and exchange, with small settlements of people clustered according to variable relations of kinship and place. There were patterns of achieved or inherited rank, and in most places the segregation of male and female persons, who embodied differentiated, even antithetical, sacred powers. The precolonial religion consecrated origins in place and ancestral being and witnessed such power in healthy and fertile people, good crops and pigs which were corpulent or had fine ivory tusks. The archipelago was characterized by extreme cultural and linguistic

diversity-with about 110 languages-and by small, decentralized and heterogenous polities. In some of the central and southern islands there were hereditary chiefs and elsewhere hierarchy was a crucial value in patterns of achieved rank, but there were no expansive chiefly polities like those of eastern Fiji, Tonga, or Hawaii (see Jolly 1991a, 1994b). An overarching state and indeed the recognition of the archipelago as one place was rather the result of foreign incursion.

The first exploratory voyages by Europeans were those of De Quiros (1606), Bougainville (1768) and Cook (1774) who bequeathed its colonial place name—the New Hebrides—in nostalgic recollection, yet again, of the British Isles. Then, from the nineteenth century both land and people were subject to the extractions of those who came to trade in sandalwood, in *beche de mer* and in labour for the plantations of Queensland (Australia), Fiji and nearby New Caledonia. From the mid-nineteenth century, there were foreign planters and settlers, including Christian missionaries both Protestant and Catholic. Commercial and denominational differences were entangled with the rivalry between the two colonial powers—Britain and France. British interests emanated from the colonies which were to become a federated Australia in 1900, as much as from London while French investments were similarly derived from strategic interests in colonies in nearby New Caledonia and Polynesia, as well as the imperial visions of Paris. After a Joint Naval Commission in 1887, Britain and France proclaimed joint colonial control, as co-sovereign over indivisible territory, through the Condominium of 1906 (Jacomb 1914). This prevented a partition of the archipelago but produced a government which was weak, chronically divided between British and French interests, and largely indifferent to the local population. Past legitimating European alienation of land, policing labour recruiting intermittently and intervening in violent disputes between Europeans and indigenes and between French and British settlers, the colonial state had little impact on local ways of life, until the late colonial period. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries labour recruiting to plantations in Queensland, Fiji and New Caledonia, the

development of plantations of cotton, copra and other cash crops and the efforts of Christian missionaries were far more consequential Precolonial practices were probably most changed by the arrival from the 1840s of Christian missionaries—London Missionary Society (LMS), Reformed Presbyterians, Melanesian Mission (Anglican), Marists, and later a congeries of more fundamentalist faiths—Church of Christ, Seventh Day Adventists and Assemblies of God.

From the 1930s the colonial state did attempt forms of indirect rule through local 'assessors' and then through local courts and councils, but their power was limited and diluted by the division between British and French interests. This divided colonial state persisted into the period of independence politics. France had always had a far more serious interest in the colony than England, which was there primarily as a result of annexationist sentiments emanating from Australia. Thus not surprisingly the dominant French mercantile and settler interests held on strongly in the late colonial period, while the British were more amenable to pulling out, as graciously as possible.

The first stirrings of nationalist sentiments were witnessed falteringly in the emergence of Na-Griamel, a movement with headquarters on Espiritu Santo which from the early 1960s called for all alienated land to be returned to indigenes, and more certainly in the formation of the New Hebrides Cultural Association in Santo in 1971 (later to form the National Party and thence the Vanuaaku Pati, see Sope 1974, Plant 1977).[3] This was dominated by those with an English education and Protestant church affiliation. Against them were ranged a variety of anti-independence and Francophone forces, who formed a coalition of 'Moderates'. The French co-opted Na-Griamel and promoted anti-independence sentiments and secessionist attempts by Na-Griamel on Espiritu Santo and *kastom* and John Frum adherents on Tanna (see Beasant 1984, Bonnemaison 1994, Shears 1980 and Van Trease 1987). At the proposed moment of independence in July 1980, secessionist movements threatened to impede the process. They were variously supported by French settlers, the French state and some American speculators in international finance and right

wing politics. At the eleventh hour they were defeated by both political and military manoeuvres. Troops were brought in from Papua New Guinea to quell the secessionist movement on Santo in August 1980, and after his son was killed by a grenade, Jimmy Stevens, the leader of Na-Griamel, surrendered. So, in contrast to most other states of the Southwest Pacific, where independence was conferred peacefully and even peremptorily by foreign powers, here there was a struggle which at points erupted in violence. Partly as a result of such struggles, nationalist sentiments in Vanuatu grew stronger than in other independent states elsewhere in the Southwest Pacific.[4]

Although these independence struggles never matched the larger and more violent nationalist struggles of Africa, South Asia and the Americas, there was likewise a recuperation of the local, the indigenous, 'traditional' values and practices of life prior to European incursion. This was particularly signalled in the reclamation of alienated land to its indigenous or *kastom* owners (Larmour 1984, Van Trease 1987). The very name, Vanuatu, assumed in 1980, when the independent republic was proclaimed, suggests this. This is how it was explained a decade later in a volume which celebrated the tenth anniversary of independence.

> There was a strong feeling that the name of the emerging state had to reassert forcefully and indelibly our existence. The new name had to reflect our existence before the arrival of Europeans and long after their departure. The new name should recall our being ravaged by the impact of their contact, our resistance, resilience, endurance and survival.
>
> The committee chose a combination of two words: *vanua* meaning land, home, state, origin; and *tu* meaning to be, to exist, to stand, to aspire, to hope, strength, roots, history, the past, the present, the future, infinity. Put together, Vanuatu means Our Land Forever! (*Vanuatu* 1990:26–7).

At the national, no less than the local level, there was an element of primordialism—of reference back to an original state, of the condensation of people and place. In the imagery of Grace Mera Molisa's nationalist poetry Vanuatu was 'black stone'-solidified

lava flow, immobile and eternal (1983). In political debates in Bislama, the pidgin *lingua franca* of Vanuatu, a central concept was *man ples*—a condensation of person and place.

But as well as the reclamation of place there was a reclamation of the past, and especially that aspect of the past marked as *kastom*. This was particularly pronounced in the decades before and after independence in 1980. *Kastom,* is a Bislama word which loosely translates as tradition, but evokes not so much the totality of ancestral practices as a particular selection of such practices for the present (see Jolly 1992a). The state was not alone in using the concept. It was also available to secessionist movements resisting the state. Moreover, it was a central concept at the local level either in proclaiming resistance to European colonizers (as in the traditionalist enclaves in Pentecost, Malakula and Tanna), or in negotiating compromises between tradition, Christianity and commerce. There was a recuperation of *kastom* in many local Christian communities—revivals of the traditional rites of pig-killing and taking rank, kava-drinking, making pandanus mats and sculpted wooden artifacts.

The selective revival of *kastom* was also a central part of the ideology of the Vanuaaku Pati in government—as witnessed in the logo of the new independent state (see Figure One)—an image of a man dressed in indigenous attire and surrounded by a pig's tusk and cycas leaves. But importantly underneath was the motto *Long God Yumi Stanap* (In God we are independent). As at the local level, Christianity was exempted from its association with colonialism, and viewed positively, not negatively, as intrinsic to sovereign statehood and personal independence. In an official exegesis of the symbolism of the flag—the red is said to represent shared blood or race, the black the colour of the people, the green their agricultural base while 'the yellow shows we are enlightened by the light of Christianity' (*Vanuatu* 1990:29, compare Clark this volume). Thus the values of *kastom* and Christianity were conjoined in nationalist rhetoric.

But how did all this relate to women? Women had in fact been part of the grassroots movement for independence. But ten years after, female leaders prominent in the nationalist movement were

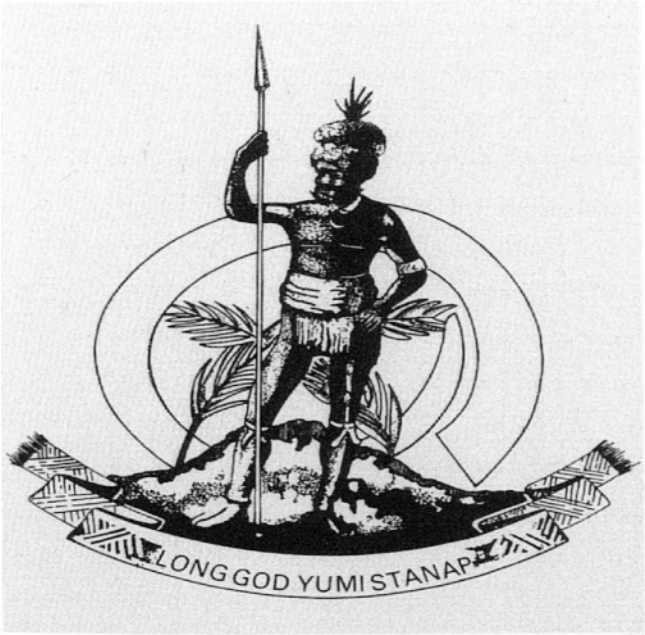

Figure One: The national logo of Vanuatu

wondering what they had to celebrate, whether independence for men had in fact meant independence for women. This was poignantly expressed by one such woman, Grace Mera Molisa, poet and politician, erstwhile Personal Secretary to the Prime Minister and longterm advisor to the National Council of Women (see Jolly 1991a). Witness her poem which appears opposite (Figure Two).

SIGNS OR SUBJECTS

The relation between the emancipatory promise of an independent nation and of independent women was as elsewhere conflicted and troubled. Women were often signs in political discourses monopolized by men rather than themselves speaking subjects. Moreover, as both signs and subjects women often were located at the intersection of roads which traced the narrative of the nation down divergent paths, and constructed the directionality of past,

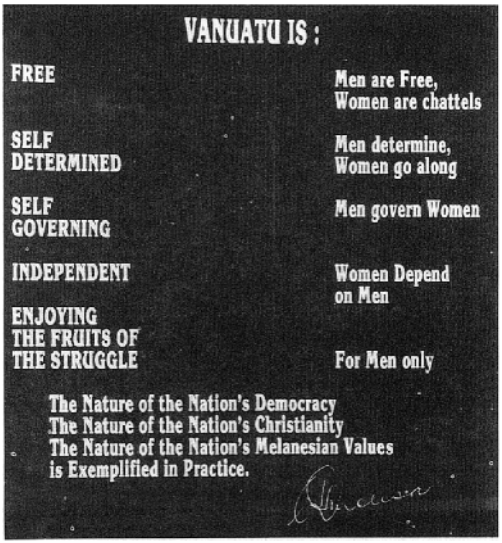

Figure Two: Poem by Grace Mera Molisa

present and future differently. In one direction there was recourse to 'a reaffirmation of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a communal past' (Kandiyoti 1991a:431), the discourse of *kastom*. On the other was that 'modern project that melts and transforms traditional attachments in favour of new identities', (1991a:431) the discourse of development, democracy and more recently, human rights.

In exploring this tension I will focus especially on some materials emanating from the National Council of Women in Vanuatu (VNKW) in the period between 1990 and 1992.[5] The first is a corpus of documents associated with a festival held in 1990 to celebrate ten years of independence: *Woman I Bildimap Vanuatu* (Women Build Vanuatu). It is a record and a series of testimonials of the National Festival of Women and includes a programme of proceedings, a culture booklet, a collection of poems, a bibliography of writings on women in Vanuatu, a collection of photos, a registry of leaders and a report on the festival and the workshops, including expenditure (Boersma 1991, VNKW 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). Posters, T-shirts and videos were

also produced. These several texts engage the language of nation building as cultural production, of unity in diversity, not just by recourse to notions of *kastom* or tradition but by insisting on the shared experience of indigenous and exogenous influences in creating unity in the nation.

The second text I will examine is the response by the National Council of Women (VNKW) to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW; Mera Molisa 1992). The latter engages more directly the language of freedom and emanicipation, of human rights, importantly not just as citizens of the nation-state but as global citizens. In all these publications there is a palpable tension between appeals to *kastom* and modernity, between the discourses of tradition and of freedom and of rights, but a tension which ni-Vanuatu women, and especially urban, well-educated feminists, are trying to negotiate in their writings and their political strategies.

WOMAN I BILDIMAP VANUATU

From May 6 to May 18, 1990, in association with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the independent nation in July of that year, a *Nasonol Festivol Blong Ol Woman* was held in Port Vila. This brought over a thousand women to the capital, representatives of all the island chapters of VNKW, village and town councils, womens' clubs, church groups, and many individual women. During the course of these twelve days a series of workshops and other festival events were held, dealing with issues relating to health, nutrition, environment, child development, education, legal rights, domestic and workplace violence, appropriate and household technology, communication, sports, church and culture. There was a fashion parade of contemporary styles and a parade of custom dress, field trips around Vila town and to nearby villages, a poetry workshop, and numerous radio reports and interviews.[6] The events covered a range of topics which negotiated tradition in modernity, and the relevance of the past in the present and for the future. But all of this was arrayed to mobilize women in the name of the nation—

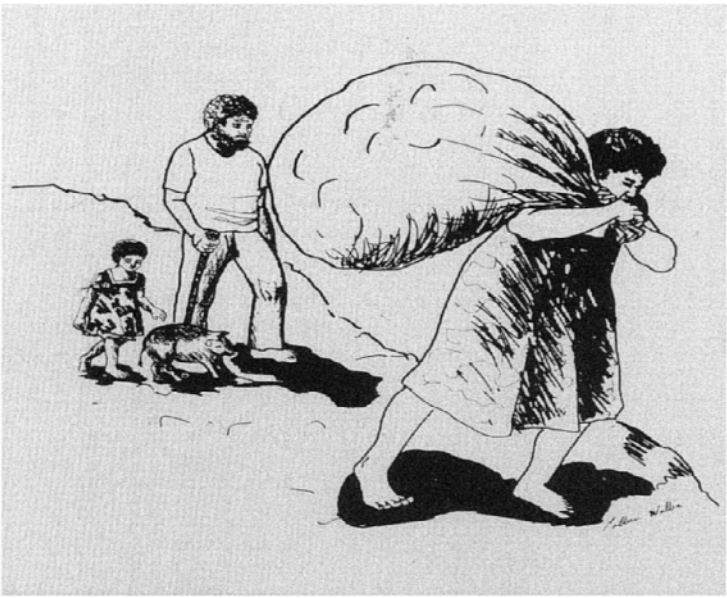

Figure Three: Drawing from Who Will Carry the Bag

woman i bildimap Vanuatu—and in the context of the celebration of ten years of independence.

Their purpose was to further the *'waeda divelopmen blong olketa wan wan mo Neson blong yumi Vanuatu'* (the wider development of all individuals and our nation, Vanuatu) but also to look forward to the next decade in the hope that the situation *'blong yumi ol Woman long Vanuatu i save impruve ikam antap moa'* (of us, all the women of Vanuatu can improve further yet). The publications also reiterate the central motto of the VNKW namely, Unity, Peace and Prosperity in the achievement of a *Gudfala Laef* (a Good Life). What clearly emerges is thus both a celebration of women but also a lament that they are not given due recognition as the partners of men, in either domestic or public domains.

There are within the documents generated by these activities, powerful criticisms of the subordination of women both in traditional practices and processes of the modern state. Some of

these emerge most poignantly in the booklet *Who Will Carry the Bag?*, a selection of poems in English and in Bislama, presented during the festival by women and children, and some men. The canonical image of woman which emerges is as wife and mother and especially the hardworking and unacknowledged partner of man—the one who 'carries the bag' (see Figure Three). There is a pervasive stress on a woman's daily work making gardens, rearing pigs, making mats, bearing and nurturing children, giving love and advice to her husband while he sits down and *spels* (rests), talks with other men and drinks kava or alcohol. Says Meriam Ishamael in *Modernization* 'I was born in the darkness', a reference not to a pre-Christian past, but to her state of unknowing conjugal subordination (VNKW 1991c:43), a state of slavery which was redressed through education about equality and the dawning of the 'modern world'. In similar vein Helen Masing laments how *'Braed Praes i mekem mi fil olsem wan spid bot O trak blong oli pem'* (Bride price makes me feel like a speed boat or a truck for sale; VNKW 1991c:12). It makes her family greedy for a high price, her affines angry if she doesn't give them a baby boy and her husband believe that she must always obey him. The lack of appreciation of women's domestic value is often seen as translating into a lack of value in the family of the nation. Meriam Ishamael ironically asserts (VNKW 1991c:18):

> I am educated
> I have come to recognize the role of girls;
> Slaves, child bearers, sex mates,
> Where is our future?
> Where is our freedom?
> After ten years where is our Independence?

But she finds solace and hope in a future transformation of this condition:

> We are the future mothers
> who will bring up respectful children
> We help develop Vanuatu

We help build this nation.

And in this building the work of teaching tradition is vaunted alongside modern skills.[7] In a more light-hearted vein Alcina Garae, then just nine years old, declared in her poem *Mummy* (VNKW 1991c:44):

And if it is true that daddy has become a 'Big man'
through you,
then tell me,
Why in the *Nasara**
Daddy has never mentioned your name
and if it is true that through the VNCW
that Daddy will learn to say thank you
then I will pray to God and whisper thank you

(**Nasara*, Bislama word for sacred grounds in which cultural ceremonies are performed; note in the original.)

Many poems culminate with a final plea or a whisper to God, seen as both the ultimate giver of life and of Christian values, the source of fairness and equality. So the poem *Woman* by Avin concludes (VNKW 1991c:39):

Yu stampa blong laef long wol
Sista
Stanap
Yu no blong wan man
Be
Yu blong God

(You are the source of the life of the world, sister stand up. You don't belong to one man but to God). Similarly after witnessing female drudgery and hard work in *Blak Woman* (VNKW 1991c: 28), Rachel Bule cries out in conclusion, O GOD! KRIESEN INO FEA SAMPLES (O God! Christians are not fair in some places).

VANUATU I BILDIMAP WOMAN?

This national festival of celebration of women mobilized in the name of the independent state perforce posed the reciprocal question of how the nation-state had mobilized for women in its first ten years. As in Papua New Guinea the independent constitution had some resounding rhetoric about women's emanicipation. But as in Papua New Guinea (cf. Johnson 1984, Macintyre n.d., Sepoe 1994), the practical outcomes have not been very great—there was still at that time only one woman, Hilda Lini, in Parliament, and still today very few women are to be found in high positions in the bureaucracy or the executive (see Mera Molisa 1987, Jolly 1991a). In the words of the second VNKW document: *woman inokat/ i no plande* in all these spheres (that is there are no or few women; Mera Molisa 1992:86).

Hilda Lini was the only woman in Parliament, while Grace Mera Molisa had not attained an elected office but was till 1990 the Personal Secretary of the Prime Minister, and long term advisor to the National Council of Women. Vanuatu's first female magistrate (Rita Naviti of Santo) was appointed in 1993 and there have been only a handful of women who have reached positions of bureaucratic influence, mainly in the Departments of Women's Affairs and Attorney General's. In the elections of November 1995, several women stood, including six women nominated by VANWIP (Vanuatu Women in Politics, a new party). But none of the latter were successful and only Hilda Lini was elected. But the problem is not just one of women's statistical political representation but how resources are distributed, how women are dealt with in law, and indeed how the state represents itself.[8] In all these ways the state is strongly masculinist. Ni-Vanuatu women have highlighted questions about women's marginalization in development and women's legal situation, especially in relation to family law and domestic violence, issues which I consider elsewhere.[9] Here I will focus rather on the narratives of nationhood, and how the state deploys the language of *kastom* to legitimate itself.

Its masculinist character is perhaps clearest in iconography—witness the state logo, earlier mentioned (Figure One). This is no

androgynous image of the postcolonial citizen-but a man attired in a sanitized form of the penis sheath, rendered like a loin cloth with several of the accoutrements of precolonial male power—a spear, body ornaments, with the everpresent pig's tusk and cycas leaves at his rear (in the past symbols of male attainment of rank in the graded society ritual of the northern islands, see Jolly 1991b). As earlier noted, below him is the motto of the state *Long God Yumi Stanap* (In God we are independent). But this 'standing up', this posture of independence is assumed by a man wearing generically traditional attire and accoutrements and in implied defiance of the colonizers who have earlier laid him low. Where are women to be situated in such an image? We learn from the exegesis of this symbol in the text published ten years later: women constitute the ground from which the man emerges. He stands not just in the soil of Vanuatu but on a ground covered by mats:

> the mat in front of the man recalls the importance of agriculture in our traditional economy. Mats are the products of women's labour and women are the producers and managers of our agricultural economy (*Vanuatu* 1990: 27).

It is interesting to compare this representation to that from which it clearly derives, a European lithograph of the mid-nineteenth century (Erskine 1853:332) which has not just the figure of the man (in a much briefer *nambas*) but also a woman and a child, wearing the striking costume characteristic of Efate, a waist girdle with a long pandanus tail hanging down the back (Figure Four). This familial grouping of figures was apparently considered inappropriate to the national logo (compare Figure One),[10] although in contrast, the logo of the VNKW does present an image of a family—man, woman and child (Figure Five).

The power of the state is not only iconographically legitimated by the emblems of male customary power in the northern islands—pigs' tusks and cycas leaves, it is also legitimated through male politicians assuming traditional titles and through two institutions constructed as custodians of *kastom*. These are respectively Malvatumauri and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. The first is the

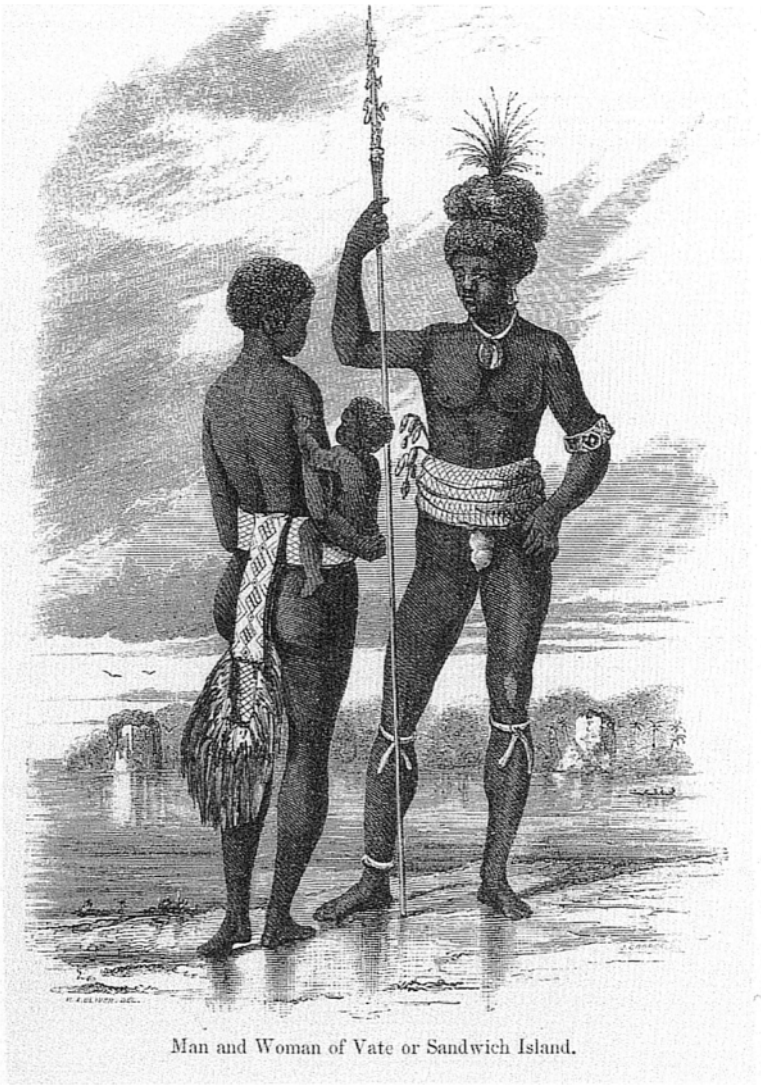

Figure Four: 'Man and Woman of Vate or Sandwich Island' from Erskine 1853: facing p. 332

National Council of Custom Chiefs. This was set up as an advisory body on matters of tradition rather than endowed with any

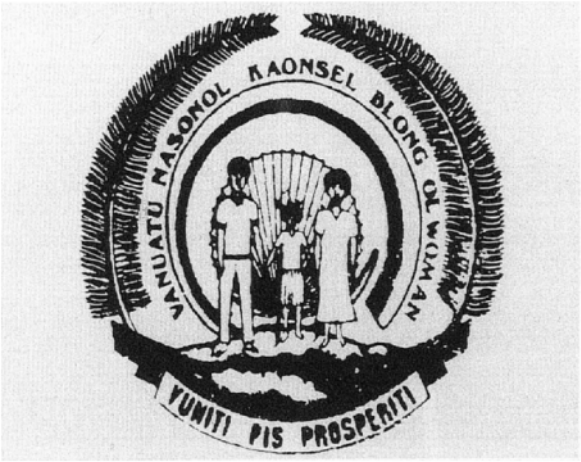

Figure Five: Logo of the Vanuatu National Council of Women (*VNCW-VNKW*)

legislative or executive powers. It is an exclusively male assembly of twenty-two chiefs representing chiefs from the eleven local government council regions. It was headed from its inception till 1993 by *Jif* Willi Bongmatur of North Ambrym.[11] In several statements he suggested that mutual dependence and complementarity of women and men was crucial to *kastom*. In a sympathetic epilogue at the end of the VNKW book on CEDAW, he writes

> *Woman hemi mama blong man, Woman hemi sista blong man.*
>
> *Woman hemi waef blong man. Woman hemi pikinini blong man.*
>
> *Woman ikat kastom mo kalja. Olsem man ikat kastom mo kalja*
>
> (Mera Molisa 1992:86)
>
> (Woman is the mother of man, woman is the sister of man. Woman is the wife of man. Woman is the daughter of man. Woman has tradition and culture. Just the same, man has tradition and culture).

But arguably in other statements, policies and recommendations of the Malvatumauri about preserving traditional culture, women's situation has been rendered rather differently. Rather than simply deploying a familial model where men and women are depicted as having reciprocal and complementary relations and powers, there is another pervasive model—that of hierarchy—and respect for the high-ranking, elders, and men. There is a widespread acceptance of the principle that only men can be *jifs* (chiefs), and in several statements by the Malvatumauri this title is represented as hereditary rather than achieved (although this varied precolonially). The cultural policy statement issued by Malvatumauri in 1983 encodes and indeed consolidates not just the powers of chiefs, but of men over women (see Lindstrom 1994; Lindstrom n.d.). *Jifs* are said to have the power to ensure that marriages are made according to family wishes and to proscribe abortion, polygamy, elopement and adultery by either sex. It also suggests that the sons of chiefs should take daughters from chiefly families and that chief's sons who aspire to be chiefs themselves should take wives locally and not from another country or even island, for this would mean a confusion of traditions (Article 7B.1). It confers on *kastom jifs* the power to regulate the movement of people, men and women, between villages and islands (Articles 4, 5).

There are some provisions which are clearly made in women's interests. For example Article 23 specifies that women giving birth should be attended by local women and subsequently be given cooked food and firewood and be bathed by other women. This is typified as *wan respect long saet belong algeta woman* (a respect appropriate to women). If there are problems it conceeds that a doctor or a qualified dresser might be called. Article 14 declares that a man should be responsible for his illegitimate child (*pikinini blong rod*) and that if the woman is not married and she is an eligible spouse in *kastom,* he should marry her. If she is already married or a proscribed relative, he should help look after and maintain the child, and abide by any rulings of a *kastom kot* (traditional court). Moreover, it urges that any illegitimate children should still have rights to the father's land. If an unwed mother

wants to keep the child and remain with her natal kin, the policy stipulates that it is reasonable if this is a daughter, since she will move somewhere else. But if the child is a son, the father should take him, since he is not entitled to land at his mother's place. If he does receive land at his mother's place, this has to be agreed to by the father in a customary settlement (cf. Lindstrom 1994:239–240). By ratifying and codifying the variable principles of customary land tenure (Articles 1 and 10) in Vanuatu, it enshrines, consolidates and probably enhances the dominant tradition of male ownership, control and inheritance of land (see Larmour 1984, Rodman 1995).

Powers are also conferred on male *jifs* in adjudications of *kastom* law, which it urges should be codified and written down for each island. *Jifs* are also given the power to preserve local languages, handicrafts, dress, customs of respect and what are called *kastom human raet* (customary human rights; Article 30). These, it is stressed, are not to be confused with those of other countries, but are local rights to live in one's own land, village and dancing ground, to be surrounded by family and friends, and to live according to one's custom and culture.

In its code and practice, there is a clear emphasis on cultural diversity—expressed in the constant use of the phrase *wan wan aelan* (each separate island) as much as the nationally unifying potential of *kastom*. The power of the Malvatumauri is constrained by its advisory role, alongside the more powerful, universally elected Parliament. Its power is much less than the Council of Chiefs in Fiji (see Lawson, this volume, Chapter One). But it both legitimates the state and is legitimated by it (see Lindstrom n.d.). Both are equally male assemblies and both, even if they attempt to act in women's interests or to ensure women are 'respected', still embody the fundamentally male character of indigenous (though transformed) hierarchies and of elected political elites.

Similarly in the work of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, there was until recently an almost total male monopoly of *kastom*. The VCC (which consists of a museum, the VCCM, and a library) has been very impressive in the range of Pacific cultural centres, partly

because rather than just a site for expatriate or tourist viewing it is a place where locals congregate. Moreover, it has had an active programme of indigenous fieldworkers working in outer islands. But up until 1991, these had all been men and indeed many considered women quite inappropriate to record or recuperate *kastom*—be it knowledge, myths, songs and rituals. This has been challenged and to some extent changed by a project in which Lissant Bolton, a curator from the Australian Museum, has been working at the VCCM with Jean Tarisesei and other women from Ambae on their relation to *kastom,* primarily through the medium of that valued artifact, wealth and exchange item-mats (Bolton 1993, 1994). So in the language of authentic cultural difference which legitimates national identity, women are still secondary but are struggling hard to reassert their power, as an integral part of *kastom.* Indeed Bolton suggests that in the course of the Women's Culture Project on Ambae, mats were recognized not just as things used in *kastom* ceremonies but as *kastom* themselves. This project to promote, document and revive women's weaving skills is now, in 1994–5, being developed across the archipelago, and is giving women both a new perspective on their routine activities and also a sense that their contribution to *kastom* has value, a worth increasingly recognized by government in promoting women's enhanced status. The relation of male to female, and stability to progress is nicely evoked in a metaphor used on Ambae, that 'women's *kastom* is to men's *kastom* as an outrigger is to a canoe—absolutely necessary, balancing and enabling' (Bolton 1994:160).

WOMAN IKAT RAET LONG HUMAN RAET O NO?

Let me now turn to *Woman Ikat Raet Long Human Raet O No* (Do women have rights in (as) human rights or not)? This includes the text of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and became an international treaty in 1981. By 1993 about 117 nations were parties to the convention, with the majority fully ratifying and some submitting reservations about particular clauses. Most of these

reservations had to do with family law and citizenship and with women's legal capacity—in a few cases it was apropos the definition of discrimination itself, employment or labour rights (see Tomasevski 1993:117–118). The process of ratification was singularly slow in the Pacific. By 1990 there were only two Pacific island countries-namely the Cook Islands and Niue, who had ratified because of their relationship with New Zealand.[12] In March 1991, a South Pacific regional seminar of women was held in Rarotonga to consider this convention. It endorsed its ratification by Pacific island states and observed a wide number of benefits which might flow from accession to CEDAW. But it also warned that there were several obstacles which might impede this—problems with resources needed to provide information and mobilize support, and problems because Pacific women were not aware of or did not understand the Convention. But perhaps most crucial were two other impediments, namely '[t]hat the provisions of the Convention might be perceived not to be in harmony with existing traditions and customs which provide a basis for identity', and that '[m]en may perceive that equality threatens their status and authority' (Mera Molisa 1991:78).

There was mounting evidence from the region that these two impediments were large if not insurmountable. At the South Pacific Forum meeting at Pohnpei in 1991, the assembled heads of states refused to discuss any of the recommendations of the Rarotonga workshop save for those about disseminating information. The Prime Minister of Fiji noted that the Fijian government representative at the meeting had walked out because

> she did not agree with the values that were being imposed on the meeting by Western participants. Many aspects of Fijian traditional culture were controlled by women (ibid.:84).

The host of the Rarotonga meeting, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands observed that such views were also expressed in his country, and that some thought the position of women was laid down in the Bible. The Prime Minister of Western Samoa concurred, arguing that the Forum should not place undue weight on this issue:

> Already in Western Samoa all women over the age of twenty-one were entitled to vote. There was even a woman in the Cabinet, and he would have no hesitation in appointing more if any were capable of performing at ministerial level. There were Christian and Biblical issues involved in the issue… There was no discrimination against women in Western Samoa (ibid.:84).

This defensive rhetoric on the part of several heads of states is roundly denounced in the Vanuatu booklet, partly by deploying the Polynesian/Melanesian divide. Apropos women in Western Samoa—it is observed that some women occupy high positions in such countries because of their status in hereditary chiefly families and not because they are representatives in a democratic sense. The authors ask rhetorically, and in large type

> WAE NAO OL LIDA LONG FORUM OLI TALEM SE INO KAT DISKRIMINEISEN AGENSEM OL WOMAN LONG PASIFIK (ibid.:85).

Roughly translated this means 'Why have all the leaders at the Forum said that there is no discrimination against women in the Pacific'. It refutes this—*hemi ino wan Tru Tok* (this is not a true statement)-and suggests rather that throughout the Pacific there are many practices which contradict CEDAW: women are poor, exploited by men, assaulted by men, raped by men. There are either none or very few women in high positions, in parliaments and in cabinets. It observes that in the very same week that these Prime Ministerial pronouncements emanated from the Forum, that there was a large demonstration of women in Rarotonga against rape.

The text also criticizes the fact that the Vanuatu representatives were not briefed about CEDAW before the South Pacific Forum, and indeed that the two representatives at the Rarotonga forum had either before or just after the Forum, been sacked from government. Grace Mera Molisa was sacked from her job as Secretary to the then Prime Minister Walter Lini on 16th October 1990, and Rolinas Lolo from her position as Head of Women's

Affairs just after her return from the Rarotonga seminar.[13] Although these sackings were not directly related to the stance these women took at this seminar, it did not augur well for the speedy implementation of CEDAW in Vanuatu. And indeed it was not until March 1995 that the Vanuatu Parliament ratified CEDAW.[14]

The VNKW report concludes by cataloguing the forms of discrimination against women in Vanuatu. The predominance of men in committees, councils and Parliament, men's higher status within the job market, higher pay and greater ease of promotion, men's greater opportunities in school and training, men's freedom to *spel* (take a break), to congregate with friends and tell stories in *nakamals* (men's houses).[15] It also bemoans that women do not bear their own names and identities but those deriving from men, that men own property and that women are the property of men, and that men enjoy freedom, while women do not. The contrasts between the postcolonial situation of men and women and the hypocrisy of the language of liberation being applied only to men, is aptly satirized in the poem of Grace Mera Molisa reproduced in the booklet and above (Figure Two).

Clearly this report engages the language of emancipation and equal opportunities of modern citizen-subjects. But it is significant that this relates to an international convention, emanating from the United Nations, rather than the emanicipatory project of a nation-state. And in the context of postcolonial nation-states in the Pacific, this has both a promise and a risk. The promise is that of international support for enacting such provisions and even of international monitoring and surveillance of breaches. The risk is that it will be too easy to dismiss CEDAW as foreign intrusion in domestic affairs, and as the imposition of Western values—to paraphrase the objections of those male heads of states at the South Pacific Forum. And in defending the 'domestic' against Western intruders and traditionalist particularities against modernist homogenizing, women will again be too easily evoked (see Jolly 1996). Whereas many other values of tradition may be sacrificed to, or at least compromised by, development, globalization or Christianity, the value of tradition signalled by

women's relation to men is often adjudged to be sacrosanct (compare Otto on Narokobi, this volume, Chapter Two). But we might ask what makes this relation so sacrosanct in the face of change?

In opposing CEDAW, the then Prime Minister of Western Samoa also said that there were 'Christian and Biblical issues involved in the issue'. Christianity is the missing term in my discussion so far. I now suggest, that in the Pacific context Christianity mediates between the claims of authenticity through tradition and the emancipatory promises of freedom and development Michael Young has noted (this volume, Chapter Four) how national narratives 'ride on Christianity's back'. He detects a confluence between Christian and nationalist rhetoric. This is patent in the deployment of that master narrative of rupture—the passage from the time of darkness into the time of light—which signals both the difference between the heathen past and the Christian present, and that between the closed world of 'not knowing' and the dawning of secular enlightenment through education and exposure to the values of modernity (see Meriam Ishamael's poem, *Modernization,* above). But as Young also notes the narratives of both Christian conversion and of nationhood also envision peace instead of war, unity and harmony in lieu of ethnic particularism or tribal divisiveness. We might also detect how nationalist appeals to women as citizens are likewise saturated with the values and tropes of Christianity, especially in their stress on enlightenment, improvement, peace, and harmony.

CHRISTIANITY: THE MISSING MEDIATOR

I started with Kandiyoti's observation that nation-state formation is both a 'modern project that melts and transforms traditional attachments in favour of new identities', while on the other hand it calls for 'a reaffirmation of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a communal past' (1991:431). Arguably contemporary Christianity is involved in and mediates these seemingly contradictory projects, especially as they relate to women. It is affirmed as part of the authentic cultural values of the communal past of ni-Vanuatu, but it has also melted and

transformed localized attachments and kinship identities in the name of 'one God'.[16] It might be typified as an earlier and still ongoing process of Melanesian modernism. During the process of conversion in the Pacific islands, Christianity called for a rejection of many traditional practices and also summoned forth a new subject—the Christian, who had in the narrative of conversion passed from the state of darkness into the light of Christian dawn.

For women in particular there was a promise of emancipation, of improvement of their situation vis-a-vis men. Thus Christian missionaries variously tried to: release Melanesian women from the drudgery of being 'beasts of burden' in the fields for the pleasures of domestic labour; remove women from the strictures of kinship collectivities and arranged marriages to be mothers and wives in nuclear families formed by free choice and the values of conjugal partnership; eliminate the bride price which they alleged converted women into objects of exchange; break down the taboos and the violence of ancestral religion and warfare which kept men and women apart and subjugated women to men's 'brutality' in public and private spaces (see Jolly 1989, 1991c). Of course, such prosyletizing promises were often based on powerful misconceptions which failed to credit the value of women and indeed their power and influence in indigenous cultures (see for example Dureau 1994, Gailey 1980, Ralston 1989, and compare Narokobi in Otto, this volume, Chapter Two).

Moreover, the processes of change consequent to Christian conversion, involved the active agency and transformative powers of indigenous ni-Vanuatu Christians who did not simply blithely follow the dictates of missionaries—be they Europeans or other Pacific Islanders. Women still work hard in their gardens; kinship collectivities endure alongside more nucleated families; marriages still often entail a mix of choice and familial arrangement; and the bride price is still pervasive. Although warfare was more finally terminated than in other Pacific countries and ancestral religion has been eclipsed, notions of ancestral power and sorcery persist and coalesce with Christian concepts and values. Finally, not all of the values and practices introduced by Christian missionaries improved women's lives. Christianity was rather in Dureau's apt

phrase a 'mixed blessing' for women (1994)-the very stress on conjugal domesticity, on being good wives and mothers is in many ways a diminution (see Jolly 1989).

Still there is little doubt that it was in the context of the Christian Churches that women first heard the ideas of improvement and enlightenment, as human beings but also as women in their relation to men. This prior history of Christian conversion perhaps structures Pacific women's responses to those other promises of 'emancipation'—associated with modernity, the nation-state and with the globalizing language of human rights. The way in which some women vaunt their agency in choosing marriage partners, in attacking the bride price and in celebrating ideas of complementarity and companionship in marriage owes much to missionary discourses and to the way in which ni-Vanuatu women and men have interpreted Christian messages about the family. Similarly, the way in which women deplore and try to redress domestic violence, draws on a history of missionary attacks on men's brutality as husbands, even as it elides that strand within Christianity which legitimates the rights of husbands to discipline wives (and parents to discipline children). Thus when ni-Vanuatu women encounter international projects and establish alliances with foreign donors to reform marriage and family laws or to outlaw domestic violence in the name of human rights, they are drawing on pervasively Christian models and values, as well as, and perhaps more so than, those of liberal political theory or secular humanism.

This might also partially account for the constant attention given to women's place within the family and to the concentration of familial images and metaphors to conjure women's relation to the nation-state. Of course CEDAW focuses also on women's situation beyond the family—in the so called 'public' spheres of employment, education, the law and the state. But so far it has been women's familial relations with men—primarily as wives, but also as sisters and daughters which have been focal for the projects and the discourses of ni-Vanuatu feminists. And even when the relations being construed are those of paid work, women in economic development or women in the nation-state, these are

typically imagined through the lens of the family. Now of course Vanuatu is not alone in this: familial metaphors figure in many narratives of nationhood.[17] In Vanuatu familialism has a strongly Christian tone in its emphasis on fidelity and harmony, as well as its peculiar ambivalences about whether women should be anything beyond being good wives and mothers.

But the effect of Christianity on women in Vanuatu has been not just to summon up a new female subject in the sphere of the family but also to encourage the mobilization of women as a collectivity in public fora. Especially striking has been the history of women's clubs, mothers' fellowships and the like. No doubt many such church-based women's groups have moved far beyond the role of being ladies 'auxiliaries'. They have been a very important site and model for women's collective organization and indeed in many places have been strenuous in their vision of emancipation for women (such as those Lutheran groups of Highlands Papua New Guinea which were crucial in the emergence of *wok meri,* see Sexton 1982). Such church-based women's groups have been both precursors and rivals to more 'modern' and seemingly secular collectivities like the National Council of Women and more recently the Vanuatu Women's Centre. When the National Council of Women was established in 1980 it was trenchantly opposed by the Presbyterian Church. Still in Vanuatu's villages it is probably church fellowships and mothers' clubs which continue to have the strongest local influence.[18] There is some evidence of rivalry and conflict, and different concepts of what improvement for women might mean, but nationalist organizations like VNKW draw much of their mobilizing capacity from church-based groups and indeed share many of the same Christian values and visions.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I want to situate this tension I have identified between these two languages of identity for women in this specific time and place in the broader canvas of colonial history. If we blithely equate tradition with male domination and modernity with female liberation, there is a danger of reconfiguring the old colonial debates about the position of women. Intrinsic to colonialism and

its legitimation in many parts of the world was an attack on the indigenous situation of women. The laments about women differed by site and epoch, but there was a very constant theme of 'freeing' women: from the yokes of caste, from the enclosures of the veil, from degraded states of 'savagery'. Against such colonialist and Christian constructions, it has often been argued that the powers and controls women exercized in many indigenous societies were either not seen or were erased by the colonizing practices of travellers, missionaries, traders, planters and colonial officials. Now if Pacific women are not to have a rerun of the old colonial debates, they will have to negotiate this present moment very carefully.

In particular the dichotomy whereby tradition is equated with male domination and modernity with female liberation needs to be subverted in both directions. First women need to reiterate claims to their powers as women of the place, not just in terms of ancestral practices but through the *changing* character of local cultures, and especially Christianity.[19] Secondly, women need to indigenize the language of human rights so that it becomes a language with local resonance and not one which can be dismissed as a foreign voice. The perceptions of and statements by niVanuatu women I consider here and elsewhere give hopeful signs that both these processes are ongoing. Women are asserting their value in both tradition and modernity, past and present, and indeed are trying to dissolve these invidious dichotomies which still threaten to sunder their subjectivity as women.

NOTES

1. Unveiling and reveiling has of course been a powerful symbol of modernist and anti-modernist movements in many countries of North Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia but it has also figured in statements of ethnic and Muslim identity amongst migrants in France and Germany. For a consideration of 'unveiling Algeria' see Woodhull 1991, for a review of the 'affair of the headscarves' in France, see Bloul 1994.
2. This figure is based on the total of 142,630 in the last census in 1989, with an estimated increase per annum based on the rate of increase prevailing at that time. It is very tentative.

3. There were earlier anti-colonial movements, such as the John Frum movement on Tanna and various other movements on Santo and Malakula recorded by Worsley (1957) and by Guiart (1951). The latter tends to see these as proto-nationalist, but although strongly anti-colonial or anti-European they did not envisage the independence of the entire archipelago but usually had more localized agendas. NaGriamel in its earlier stages when it was proclaiming all land should be returned to ni-Vanuatu, had both an anti-colonial and potentially a nationalist programme. It certainly had support from many ni-Vanuatu in islands beyond Espiritu Santo in the early 1970s. But by the end of that decade its broader support was dwindling, and it had compromised its position on land by alliances with anti-independence and French interests.
4. The independent government led by Walter Lini survived until 1991, despite splits within the ruling Vanuaaku Pati, most notably between Lini and Barak Sope. In late 1991, a new coalition government was formed between the Francophone Maxime Carlot (leading the UMP) and Walter Lini now ousted from the Vanuaaku Pati and representing a new party, NUP. The results of the election of November 1995, though at first suggesting a victory of the Unity Front and parts of the UMP, ultimately saw the formation of another UMP-NUP coalition in government.
5. I should note that although there were many women involved in the work of the festival and indeed of the VNKW in general, Grace Mera Molisa also played a very large role as co-ordinator, author and editor.
6. The major financial contributions came from the Vanuatu, Australian, New Zealand and British governments, Radisson Royal Palms Resort, Australian Freedom from Hunger, YWCA, UNIFEM.
7. In another poem by S. Ngwele called *Woman* she is vaunted as mat weaver, child raiser, soil tiller and as 'human bridge' uniting 'divided and broken tribes'.
8. In Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands there is also a very disappointing record of women attaining positions of national or regional leadership. After the earlier visibility of some 'government women' like Nahau Rooney in PNG (see Johnson 1984) there have of late been fewer women attaining elected office. In the first national parliament there were three women, in the fourth none, since all the women who contested the 1992 elections were defeated (Sepoe 1994:255). Sepoe concludes that this is not a failure on women's part, but that rather the politics of PNG has failed women.
9. In 1985 the VNKW sponsored a workshop on family law in Port Vila. This generated a lengthy report (1985) and a series of

recommendations for changes in legal and judicial practices, and indeed a new Family Law Bill. These however were not adopted by the Parliament. See my recent paper (Jolly 1996) on the questions of family law, domestic violence and women's use of the language of human rights.

10. Unlike the flag and anthem which were the subject of national competitions, this logo was not chosen by a committee, but designed by Rick Frazer on the suggestion of the then Curator of the Cultural Centre, Kirk Huffman. It should be noted that the image is regionally specific. The symbols of pig's tusk and cycas leaves (*mele*, symbolizing peace) are those appropriate to achieving rank in the northern islands, but have little significance in the southern islands where title-taking was not practised in this form. Moreover, the figure of the man has been significantly aged (I am grateful to Chris Gregory for this latter observation). In the lithograph he is clearly clean shaven and young while in the state logo he is patently older, with a thick grey beard, thus evoking the image of an elder or even a *kastom jif* (custom chief). This is precisely the exegesis offered in the official publication: 'the man is a ni-Vanuatu, a Melanesian and a chief, the spear represents his role in defence, his armbands of shell money his role in exchange, and the cycas leaves and pig's tusk signify peace' derived from chiefly authority and jurisprudence' (*Vanuatu* 1990:28). I should also note here that the statue outside the new Parliament House, donated by the government of the People's Republic of China depicts rather a family group of man, woman and child, but the questing arm pointing to the future is that of the man.
11. Noel Marisua took over in 1994.
12. In the first instance this is in association with New Zealand and in the second in free association with New Zealand.
13. Rolinas was then the president of the Vanuatu Nasonal Koansel Blong Ol Woman (VNKW/VNCW).
14. This is especiaily so since Molisa subsequent to her sacking issued an attack on the government and Lini, entitled *Raet Blong Pipol: Wea Rod*. This, like the VNKW booklet, used the language of human rights to attack alleged corruption, press control, and the lack of democratic representation. It was however later withdrawn.
15. *Nakamal* is the Bislama term for men's house. These were sites for male commensality and hospitality, dormitories for men in states of ritual danger and storehouses for ritual artifacts and sacra. They were in the past exclusive to men, but have progressively in Christian areas become open to women even if not regularly used by them (see Jolly 1989). The *nakamals* in urban areas are often open

to women but are still primarily for men congregating and drinking kava.

16. This is not to deny the fact that divisions are also created by the variety of Christian denominations, and that that there have been attempts to control the proliferation of more fundamentalist faiths.
17. This has been much discussed both for Europe and for Australia. Familialism everywhere connects the intimate relations of domesticity to the imagery of men and women as citizen-subjects—such as those images of wartime Australia, woman the homemaker-breeder and man the citizen-soldier.
18. In a recent paper on the Solomons, Regina Scheyvens has suggested that the voices of educated urban-based women have been quietened (by fear of a backlash and by being compromised) but that women in rural areas are 'rocking the boat' (1995). She exemplifies this through the Munda YWCA, the Auki Diocesan Team, and the Solomon Islands Development Trust, the first two of which are clearly church-based and the third of which has strong Christian links. The situation in Vanuatu is different-there is rather a growing feminist sensibility in both urban and rural regions-and although the VNKW and the Vila-based NGO, the Vanuatu Women's Centre, have problems with links to women in outer islands, there is not such a pervasive sense of disconnection, and of political compromise amongst educated, elite women.
19. In my emphasis on how the value of pastness can be consonant with a value of change, even in the Pacific, I differ from Lawson's more critical account of reified notions of tradition and traditionalism (this volume, Chapter One; cf. Jolly 1992b).

CHAPTER SIX
Nation or Desti-nation? Cook Islands Nationalism since 1965

Jeffrey Sissons

INTRODUCTION

While it is useful to conceive of nations as 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991), so emphasizing their ideological and invented nature, it is also important to remember that they are also much more than this. Whether pursued by or against a state, nationalization, the creation of nationhood, is a project of organization and control, power and propaganda. In short, nations are also political projects. In this chapter I discuss the transformation of Cook Islands nationality since self-government in 1965. My primary focus is upon nationalization as a state project directed towards changing political and economic objectives. I seek to show how, during the first decade of Albert Henry's government, Cook Islanders were co-opted into, and situated themselves within, this project as village members, women and youth. I then go on to narrate transformations of this nationality in the context of an increasingly tourism-dependent economy.

In a recent review of anthropological and related literature on the making of national cultures Foster asks, 'what is at stake in the anthropological study of nations and nationalism?' His reply: 'the concept of culture' and the conceptualization of cultural differences 'in world-historical terms' (Foster 1991:235). The concept of culture is at stake firstly, because it can no longer be restricted to localized structures of meaning, but instead needs to be seen as integral to structures of state power, and secondly, because

culture needs to be situated in relation to political process. In other words, what is at stake is the ability of anthropology to adequately deal with culture as both a strategic resource and a taken-for-granted system of meanings; to understand nationalization as both a state project and a less conscious process of identity formation.

The study of nationalization also encourages anthropologists to locate cultural construction and identity formation within the wider 'gobal ecumene', a domain of 'transnational interaction' (Hannerz 1989; Foster 1991). As nations become tourist destinations and nationality becomes one among many market-place identities, the commodification of nationality becomes a critical issue (Errington 1989; Handler 1990; Lofgren 1989). Foster has suggested that it might be possible to treat nations as 'imagined communities of consumption' (Foster 1991:250), as 'large-scale, non-intimate collectivities, unified by the ritualized fantasies of collective expenditure' (A. Appadurai, unpublished paper, quoted in Foster 1991:250). While still acknowledging the significance of globalized commodification, I think that, for the Cook Islands, this proposition might well be reversed; in this case we might view the nation as a *small-scale,* relatively *intimate* collectivity unified by the ritualized *realities* (and fantasies) of *tourist* expenditure.

I propose to distinguish four main periods in the recent development of Cook Islands nationalism: (1) party nationalism under Albert Henry between 1965 and 1974; (2), a first wave of ethnicization between 1974 and 1978; (3), the Davis years between 1978 and 1988; and finally (4), a second wave of ethnicization beginning in 1989 and continuing into the present. In what follows I shall briefly elaborate upon this periodization.

The period I identify as 'party nationalism' began in 1965 with the election of a Cook Islands Party (CIP) government under the leadership of Albert Henry, his government holding 14 of the 22 seats in the Legislative Assembly. During the decade from 1965 to 1974 the CIP, under Henry's charismatic leadership, strengthened and consolidated its position as the 'natural' government of a 'one-party-dominant' state (Stone 1970:130, 171). Crocombe has argued that Henry was able to achieve this relatively easily because

increased aid levels, the migration of younger, more innovative people to New Zealand, Henry's charisma, and his political 'techniques', hindered the development of significant opposition (Crocombe et al. 1979:2–3). I shall argue that elaborate displays of nationhood, a high level of organizational integration and a government monopoly of the media also contributed significantly to the establishment of CIP hegemony.

Between the snap election of 1974, which saw the CIP returned to power, and the election of 1978, which saw it lose power to the Democratic Party, the Cook Islands economy became increasingly tourismoriented. To facilitate tourist development, the Government encouraged a process of national ethnicization, that is, there was a public blurring of the distinction between Cook Islands identity and Maori identity as more definite ethnic boundaries were drawn around the imagined political community. The Cook Islands began to be promoted externally, as an ethnically distinct Polynesian nation, and internally, as a cultural community with a unique and valued Maori heritage. Institutionally, this was reflected in the establishment of a Government Cultural Division and a greater emphasis being placed on Cook Islands 'culture' in schools. This brief cultural 'revival' was significantly curtailed, however, with the fall of Henry's government in 1978.

Throughout most of the following decade Democratic and coalition governments pursued the 'New Right' policies promoted by their international aid and lending institutions. Cultural identity took a back seat to the promotion of private enterprise and tertiary education (Davis 1992:269–304). The present era in Cook Islands politics began, I suggest, in 1989 with the election of a CIP government led by Albert's cousin, Geoffrey Henry. With economic development more closely linked to tourism, a second wave of ethnicization was initiated. Facilitating this process, a Ministry of Cultural Development was established in 1990 and preparations were begun for hosting the Sixth Festival of Pacific Arts in October, 1992.

PARTY NATIONALISM, 1965–1974

The mass appeal of the nationalist idea has owed as much to its popular expression in deed as it has to its elite expression in word. While Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991) and others are certainly corrrect in emphasising the significance of 'print capitalism' or 'high culture' for the development of nationalism, we should also recognize that modernist nationalism is an ideological process that has been perpetuated behind, as much as through rhetoric: in visual display, organizational integration and mass participation. Certainly, in the establishment of a modern Cook Islands nationalism, this active, participatory dimension was of central importance. In this section I focus upon four dimensions of modernist, party nationalism during the decade 1965–74: display, mass participation, rhetoric and media-amplified charisma.

THE DISPLAY OF NATIONHOOD

Displays of nationhood require events of national significance and events of national significance become all the more so through public display. During the period 1965–1974, Albert Henry's government seized upon every opportunity to present the country to honoured guests (and itself) through staged spectacles of order and unity. The New Zealand Governor General in May 1967, the Duke and Duchess of Kent in July 1967, the Duke of Edinburgh in March 1971, the Queen in January 1974, were all treated to elaborate, highly organized and labour-intensive presentations of nationhood. Cook Islanders glimpsed their reflections in royal smiles and gazes; viewed through royal eyes, the nation became visible to itself as a youthful and loyal member of the Commonwealth.

Because their visitors were to be shown around the 'front garden' of the nation a 'massive clean-up operation' by village committees was embarked upon. For the Governor General's visit:

> Reap-hooks flew, hand lawn-mowers trimmed front lawns and motor-mowers hummed throughout the villages…by dusk, a noticeably neat and clean picture presented itself demanding attention by even the most casual viewer…men

> had trimmed the grass along the whole waterfront to resemble a home lawn (*Cook Islands News* [CIN] 2/5/67).

The sense of order would later be enhanced as guests (and thus Cook Islanders) inspected parades of uniformed youth: Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, The Boys Brigade, and Junior Missionary Volunteers (the Cook Islands had no armed forces). Such parades had been normal practice in earlier years, but their size and frequency were significantly increased during the early years of CIP government.

For the Duke and Duchess of Kent the social order on display included the traditional division of Rarotonga into three districts, or *vaka,* and their associated groupings of *ariki* and lesser chiefly titles. As the guests circled the island in a clockwise direction they were ceremonially welcomed at each *vaka* boundary. The timing of the exercise was to be precise:

> 50 yards before reaching the boundary the Royal Car [sic] slows down to 7 miles per hour and a *mataiapo* [sub chief] will 'challenge' their Royal Highnesses. On arrival at the actual boundary where the *mataiapo* will be standing the Royal Car stops until the challenge is completed (CIN 4/7/67).

After the 'challenges' (possibly 'revived' in 1967 for the occasion) each *vaka* separately entertained their guests and presented them with gifts.

For displays of unity, dance and song were to prove ideal vehicles. During royal visits and, even more impressively, during the annual Constitution (self-government) Celebrations dance portrayed a multiisland nation whose boundaries extended well beyond the main island of Rarotonga. For the Duke of Edinburgh, in 1971, the nation presented itself, through a drum-dance in three movements, as essentially bi-cultural. The first movement was in a 'northern-group style', the second was an expression of enjoyment in the 'southern-group style', while the third consisted of 'ancient dance movements from the northern group' (CIN 1/3/71). However, because variations in style within the northern and

southern groups were as marked as those between them, such displays of duality were soon abandoned.

Celebrations of self-government, termed Constitution Celebrations, began as an annual festival in 1966. By 1969, after some experimentation, a relatively stable tradition in the Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) sense had been established. In that year, the festivities took place over a ten-day period, culminating in speeches and presentations on 4 August, Constitution Day. The four main components of the celebrations were: (1), official speeches and the lighting of a 'constitution flame', (2), a parade of floats through the main town, Avarua, (3), sports competitions, and (4), dance competitions. The latter, first staged in 1968, soon came to be regarded as the major attraction. Describing the 1968 'festival of dance' as the 'outstanding event of the celebrations' the government newspaper went on to say,

> The festival was the first time ever that a number of individual islands combined to make a show in front of the Premier and Mrs Henry and many other dignitaries. The event can best be described as one by Cook Islanders for Cook Islanders…it showed a unified, happy people working together to put on a show that was Cook Islands in flavour, Cook Islands in colour, Cook Islands in theme (CIN 7/8/68).

The embodiment of Cook Islands unity and identity in dance achieved its most complete expression in the performances of the Cook Islands National Arts Theatre (CINAT). Formed in 1969, at the initiative of two Australian choreographers, CINAT brought together a company of elite dancers to present the Cook Islands on an international stage. CINAT's first international performance was with New Zealand Maori and Australian Aboriginal groups in the 'Ballet of the South Pacific', a touring show presented as part of the Australian Cook Bicentenary celebrations. CINAT members were groomed as ambassadors for their country; their performances on and off stage were expected to be exemplary. They embodied both national pride and national unity. Percy Henderson, the then Secretary of Internal Affairs and Manager of CINAT, recalled,

> Albert (Henry) saw CINAT as a nation-builder because in those days we deliberately got performers from every island in the group and we performed every island's dances or chants, and we had to perform them better than they could themselves because they were our greatest critics. One presentation by CINAT was a presentation of the Cook Islands as a whole (1992 interview).

The performances of the eve of CINAT's departure for Australia were attended by large audiences and broadcast live 'for the benefit of outer islands' (CIN 6/3/70). The government newspaper proudly reported the successes of the tour and upon their return the troupe was honoured with a state reception; the Avarua Church Choir sang for them at the airport.

PARTICIPATION IN NATIONHOOD

Displays of nationhood were associated with high levels of organizational integration and mass participation. Preparations for the royal tours brought together a wide range of groups; churches, village committees, the National Women's Federation, the National Youth Council, the Retired Servicemans Association (RSA), the Chamber of Commerce, uniformed youth groups, schools, beautifying committees, titled leaders, and government departments all under the direction of the Ministry of Social Development (later to become the Ministry of Internal Affairs). Meetings, rehearsals, clean-ups and other activities began months in advance of an event, planned, directed and financed by government officials and CIP leaders. Preparations for the Queen's visit, for example, began five months before with a meeting attended by five hundred organizational representatives (CIN 30/8/73). In preparation for the 1968 Constitution Celebrations, twenty-six different organizations met a month before to elect eight different sub-committees (CIN 24/5/68, 11/6/68).

But participation in nationhood extended well beyond display. As village members, as women and as youth, Cook Islanders were also encouraged to *work* for the nation. Village committees were established on the main island of Rarotonga in 1966, under the

Local Government Act of that year. Co-ordinated through the Ministry of Social Development, they were a deliberate attempt to foster a spirit of 'togetherness', through which local identity might expand into national identity (Henderson 1992 interview). The Premier, Albert Henry, was explicit:

> We are sure that your committee will help you develop a pride in your village and in your nation until you are able to say without hesitation, 'this is my village, I am proud of it, this is my country, I am proud of it' (CIN 24/1/66).

Participation in the work of the village committees was participation in the economic and political life of the nation. Each Saturday, in every village, groups of men gathered to build new roads and bridges, clear blocked irrigation drains, plant crops, build meeting-houses and sea walls, and engage in numerous other local projects. The Ministry of Internal Affairs estimated (but perhaps overestimated) in 1968, that a total of 25,519 'man-hours' had been spent on such projects. By 1971, this figure had doubled (Ministry of Internal Affairs 1968, 1971).

And while the men built roads, women prepared the afternoon meal. Gender identities too, were integrated into the nation. Expatriate New Zealanders were also encouraged to assist their village neighbours, either by working alongside them or by donating food. Describing the cooperative spirit in 1966, the government newspaper noted,

> Europeans, especially, donated dozens of tins of meat, biscuits, rice, sugar and money; some of the European women baked scones for afternoon tea (CIN 8/2/66).

Europeans also had their place within the young nation.

This 'horizontal' integration at the village level was complemented by an apparent 'vertical' integration between government departments and village committees. Most practically, the Government supplied trucks, tractors, bulldozers and graders for village projects. In return, the village committees assisted the Government in its struggle:

> I thought of how much the village committee has saved the Government in the laying of that footpath…the burden that was once on the Government has been eased by the work of the village committee (Cook Islands Legislative Assembly 1967:263).

The publication of the Premier's name in one of the call-ups for a Saturday work-group only served to further emphasize the practical unity of Government and people.

Politically, the committees were encouraged to view themselves as forming the basis of a participatory democracy. In Rarotonga, each committee was represented on a *Vaka* (District) Council which decided on project priorities and the allocation of government subsidies. In practice, the extent of local decision-making hardly went beyond deciding which drain to clear next, but ideally, the new system represented an 'era of new and progressive things'. 'Why, the government is not telling us what to do, they're letting us decide for ourselves what's best!' one 'villager' is reported to have said (CIN 2/9/66).

An explicit objective of the Department of Internal Affairs was to 'integrate' local communities 'into the life of the nation and enable them to contribute fully to national progress' (CIN 15/11/72). Complementing its work with village committees, the Ministry included sections whose specific objectives were the integration of women and youth into the nation. The 'life of the nation' was, therefore, understood to be predominantly adult and male (it should therefore have been no surprise that that 'shocking' image of maleness, the God, Tangaroa, with his extended penis, was chosen to symbolize the nation in the tourist market). Women and youth were encouraged to contribute as best they could, actively supporting men who, it was assumed, would shoulder the greater share of the burden of progress.

In 1967, a national conference of women from Rarotonga and the outer islands formed the Cook Islands Women's Federation, with Albert Henry's sister, Marguerita Story, as its first president. One of its key purposes was to serve as the 'women's wing' of the CIP. Two years after its formation, the Federation could claim to represent thirty-two affiliated groups, a total of almost a thousand

members (CIN 30/1/67; Ministry of Internal Affairs 1967–69). The formation of the Federation facilitated the mobilization of women by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for state functions, Constitution Celebrations, village health and beautification programmes, and economic development. Increasingly, the latter came to mean, especially for women living in the outer islands, developing and producing handicrafts for a growing tourist market. Indeed, the 'Women's Interests' section of the Ministry soon became the 'Cottage Industry' section (Ministry of Internal Affairs 1969).

The integration of youth into the 'life of the nation' meant, in practice, the formation of youth clubs and their affiliation to a National Youth Council. Between 1967 and 1971, the number of youth clubs more than doubled, increasing from 17 to 38 (ibid. 1967–72). The clubs met in the evenings during the week to hear lectures from government representatives and visitors on a wide range of morally up-lifting and practical topics. In 1970, for example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs presented lectures on juvenile marriage, drugs, and banana planting. Also in the evenings, club members practiced dances and songs for inter-club visits, Constitution Celebrations, and other official occasions. In 1971, they were called upon to represent the nation at 23 government functions, among the more important being an airport welcome for Albert Henry (ibid. 1972; CIN 7/5/71).

THE RHETORIC OF NATIONHOOD

Displays of nationhood and occasions of mass participation in the life of the nation are irrigated and sustained by flows of nationalist rhetoric. For the Premier, the key concept and theme of many of his speeches was 'togetherness' (Henderson 1992 interview). In closing the 1970 Constitution Celebrations, for example, he chose to stress the unified and progressive nature of the nation:

> We have a House of Ariki, a National Council of Churches, a National Youth Council, a National Women's Federation… I am happy to see that people are putting aside their political differences and making a genuine effort to obtain a united people of the Cook Islands… Let us continue to march

> together to meet the future which I feel holds many promises for Cook Islanders (CIN 4/8/70).

The 13 member House of Ariki, referred to above, met annually to discuss and advise the Government on matters of custom. In practice, however, the members of the House would rarely agree, and when they did present proposals to Government, usually on matters relating to land, these were even more rarely acted upon. The main role of the House was, as far as Henry was concerned, a symbolic one. It embodied 'togetherness', representing the 'backbone' of the country:

> The *Ariki, Mataiapo, Rangatira* [i.e. titled leaders] and their tribes are the backbone of all nations in this world, for any nation to allow its backbone to be broken, or to disappear, would mean that they are relying on a foreign backbone for their survival. Their social existence would be joined to a different backbone. The Royal Family is the heritage of the people of Great Britain and they do not want this to disappear at all (Cook Islands Legislative Assembly 1966: 416).

On another occasion, the official closing of the 1967 session of the House of Ariki, the Premier, master of mixed metaphor, stressed the importance of the *spiritual* 'togetherness' provided by the House:

> Today we are a small country, a new born nation—yet the little fragments of earth which comprise this new nation are scattered over nearly a million square miles of ocean. How can a new born baby live and exist if scattered so many miles apart. Do we as a nation expect to live by the law alone? Is our binding together to be only to the house which makes the laws? Or do we want to be brought together by the spirit of something bigger than the law (CIN 24/8/67)?

Togetherness' and 'progress' were also the major values embodied in a new flag, hoisted for the first time in 1974. A competition for the flag design was organized through the government newspaper,

the judging panel appointed by Albert Henry. The panel chose as the winning design, a circle of 15 stars (representing the islands that make up the Cook group) on a blue background (representing the sea). Albert Henry accepted the basic design but rejected the colours substituting gold (stars) and a green (background), the CIP colours. Thus the party and the nation were symbolically fused. In the official press, however, green was said to represent 'everlasting growth' while the circle of gold stars symbolized 'togetherness, strength, unity of purpose and the moulding of our 15 islands into one united land and people' (CIN 23/7/73).

MASS MEDIA AND CHARISMA

Tight state control over the means of mass communication and Albert Henry's charismatic appeal, amplified by this control, were vital to the success of the nation-building project. The press and radio became essential for mobilising participation in displays of nationhood and for providing the 'appropriate' ways of 'reading' their messages. By broadcasting national events live, radio was also able to extend 'mass participation' and a sense of citizenship to the outer islands.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, through its control of press and radio, was able to mount particularly intensive and effective propaganda campaigns in support of the village committees and youth clubs. Participation in these became a matter of moral responsibility and commitment. Lists of workers for village committee projects were published regularly in the *Cook Islands News,* and photographs of happy groups beside a new bridge, or standing behind tables of food after a hard day's work, conveyed an impression of joyful sacrifice to a greater cause. Youth clubs were encouraged to give weekly talks over the radio in which news of recent activities was interspersed with suggestions on ways youth could better contribute to the nation (Ministry of Internal Affairs 1965–72).

Interestingly, while the media was solely the voice of the state, the press in particular often presented itself as the voice of the people. Hence in 1967, at the conclusion of the Constitutions

Celebrations, the Government was able to congratulate itself without appearing to do so:

> The News speaks on behalf of all the people of the Cook Islands in thanking the Government for a most pleasant and memorable holiday (CIN 8/8/67).

Albert Henry's ability as an orator had brought him a degree of charismatic appeal prior to his election as Premier. Subsequently, this appeal was to be greatly magnified through skilful use of 'his' media, especially radio. Through weekly radio speeches to the nation, Henry projected a fatherly image; that of a wise and caring leader whose first priority was the well-being of the 'little people'. He spoke simply, slowly and thoughtfully, as would a wise teacher to his students. *The Cook Islands News,* which regularly printed the Premier's speeches, adopted, on behalf of 'the people', a respectful, almost reverential tone in its articles about him. Its photographs portrayed him smiling benignly, as 'father of the nation', or as a man of the people, sharing in their joys and hardships (CIN 15/5/67; Stone 1970:146).

THE FIRST WAVE OF ETHNICIZATION, 1974–78

During the first decade of the Henry government, national identity was rarely publicly expressed in ethnic terms. Togetherness and progress were the dominant values of nationhood, values which transcended differences between Maori and European, Rarotongan and outer islander. A common 'culture' could not be a basis for national identity because culture had divided the people. Speaking as late as 1973, the Premier noted that 'tribal' differences had always meant a divided nation:

> The people did not live united. They were fighting each other because each tribe had their way of life, their customs… We may be living today in civilized times as a peaceful people, but when you look into the backbone of tribal existence in these islands there is no oneness, there is no doubt about it (CIN 26/2/73).

'Oneness' could only be found beyond tribal customs and island identities in the Church, the nation, and the party.

Primary schools did hold a 'culture day' once a year and, following the formation of the Tourist Authority in 1969, women were encouraged to revive 'traditional' crafts, but these limited developments were peripheral to the modernist project of progressive unity. More significant, as an initial step towards ethnicization during the early period, was the formation of CINAT, again coinciding with the establishment of the Tourist Authority. This represented a first, if premature, attempt by the Government to sell Cook Islands culture to an international (mainly Australian and New Zealand) tourist market. I say premature, because it was not until after 'DC 8 Day', the opening of Rarotonga's international airport on 1 November, 1973, that the marketing of Cook Islands 'culture' could begin to reap significant economic dividends.

During the years 1974 and 1975, as tourist development became national development, the Government began to promote an ethnicized sense of nationhood. Again, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, now named the Ministry of Social Services, would play a leading role, and this time it would be supported by the Ministry of Education. In 1974, a Cultural Division was established within the Ministry of Social Services. This coincided with a reinterpretation of social development as 'cultural' development Debating the insertion of the word 'culture' into the Ministry of Social Services Bill, the then Minister pointed out that,

> Previously, within the division of Internal Affairs, there has always been a section dealing with the promotion of culture, and it is quite evident the work of youth clubs, their dances, their music, their songs, their presentations, in fact our annual Constitution Day Celebrations, have always been part of this promotion of our local culture. Coming quite close to the work of the section to promote cultural development have been the activities of the Women's Federation… (Cook Islands Legislative Assembly 1974:1266).

Thus, what were previously understood as displays of national unity and forms of participation in nationhood now became aspects of cultural development. Moreover, the diversity of 'tribal customs' (plural) now became 'our local culture' (singular). The new link between cultural and national development was explicitly made by the Premier in his speech to 400 guests at the opening of the Cultural Division:

> This Division can do much in greatly assisting the realization of our main aim—building a nation (CIN 26/6/74).

But it was to be a nation built with tourist dollars; building a nation meant building a tourist destination, and building a tourist destination meant cultivating a culture. Even the Ministry of Land Development would be able to help out:

> While the Ministry [i.e. the Cultural Division] is undertaking the work of passing over legends and island crafts to our new generation, my Ministry will be dealing with the beautification or the preservation of *marae* or other places of historical importance (Cook Islands Legislative Assembly 1974:1268).

Politically and economically the building of a marketable identity was an urgent task. Indeed, the very survival of the nation appeared to depend upon it:

> Progress has smashed the doors of isolation. In spite of our smallness, we have been given the right to become adult and so we must establish an identity because if we don't establish an identity we don't exist (Premier, quoted in CIN 20/8/74).

The main role of the Division was to collect and record traditional history and other traditional knowledge from *tumukorero*—experts in such matters. To this end a Tumukorero Conference was held in August, 1974, attended by cultural experts from throughout the Cook Islands (recordings made during the conference are now in the Cook Islands National Archives). A further seminar was held in March the following year at which it

was recommended that a National Cultural Centre be established and a national dress created (CIN 27/3/75). It would be another 17 years before the former would be built and the latter, after being briefly taken up by schools, was soon forgotten.

Coinciding with the establishment of the Cultural Division, a greater emphasis was ,to be placed on 'culture' in primary schools and colleges. A few days prior to the debate over the Ministry of Social Services Bill, the Minister of Social Services directed school principals to devote:

> up to 10 periods per week of the school timetable ... to Cook Islands and Pacific cultural studies, which must include language development, arts and crafts, history and legend, music and dancing, and traditional custom (CIN 1/4/74).

The following year, during 'Education Week' (June 9–13), a new *Education Policy Statement* was released and widely promoted through the media and in community meetings. A key feature of the new policy would be a greater emphasis on 'propagating' the 'culture of the Cook Islands'. Annual School Culture Festivals and a Kia Orana (Cook Islands greeting) Day would be introduced to foster pride as a 'race of people'. The authors of the *Statement* were 'in no doubt' that the Culture Festivals of dance, drama and singing would be 'a major attraction to tourists'. But they stressed that,

> Tourism should not be the means for us to change our way of life, but rather an incentive to make us aware of who and what we are, in terms of our culture, customs and traditions (Ministry of Health and Education 1975:9).

From mid-1975, each Friday of the school week was known as 'Kia Orana Day', a day when the 'kia orana spirit' would be most strongly in evidence. This spirit of 'friendliness, love and happiness' was promoted through the wearing of colourful clothing by teachers and pupils. The wearing of flowers was encouraged to 'add colour and friendliness and a new look to the education system'. Ultimately, it was hoped, a 'national identity in dress and

fashion' might develop (ibid.; CIN 9/6/75). By 1978, however, Kia Orana Days had come to an end:

> To begin with, for the first few months, Kia Orana Days were really elaborate, with much singing and celebrating, and they got less and less elaborate until they faded out (Kauraka 1992 interview).

THE DAVIS YEARS, 1978–88

The last years of the Albert Henry government were marked by nepotism, corruption, and economic decline (Crocombe et al. 1979). In this context 'cultural' promotion became increasingly directed towards retaining state (CIP) legitimacy. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that soon after assuming power in July, 1978, the Democratic Party ('Demo') government of Tom Davis took steps to close down the state's cultural development operations. For Davis, culture was a 'dynamic process that had to adapt, where possible, to the modern world and today's technology' (CIN 18/8/82). The Cook Islands needed to focus its energies into developing a more productive economy based on agriculture and private enterprise, rather than continuing to feed a bloated public service (Davis, in Cook Islands Legislative Assembly 7/9/78). Davis later reflected,

> In my time, I said, 'the cultural thing is moving, it's pretty limited, but more important is to improve the economy'…we were pushing culture, trying to make it exist in, really, what was poverty (Davis 1992 interview).

In keeping with this approach, the Cultural Division was closed down in September, 1980—Davis thought it grossly unproductive—and School Culture Festivals were discontinued. Constitution Celebrations became less spectacular; in 1980 there was an attempt to disrupt them, and the following year the parade of floats was described in the press as 'hohum'. The structure of national organizations had been held together at the apex by members of the Henry family and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The CIP had dominated the Women's Federation, initially through Albert Henry's sister and later through her niece, and so after the 1978 elections the Federation was dissolved (Crocombe et al. 1979: 42–3). It would be 6 years before a National Council of Women was formed in its place (Crocombe 1990:27–28). As Minister of Internal Affairs, Albert Henry's son, Tupui Henry, had maintained a direct involvement in the running of the village committees and youth clubs. With the fall of the Henry dynasty, village committees lapsed into inactivity and the National Youth Council was disestablished; the latter would not be reformed until 1989.

Hence, during the Davis years almost the entire apparatus of party nationalism was dismantled. Even the flag was changed, so closely had it been associated with the CIP. The (CIP) green background, said to represent 'everlasting growth', was changed back to the blue of the initial winning design. Officially, this was said to represent the 'sea-bound' and 'peaceful' nature of the country however the fact that a lighter blue was also the Demo colour did not go unnoticed. The 'long historical association with Britain and the Commonwealth' was recognized through the inclusion of a Union Jack in the flag's left-hand corner. The circle of fifteen stars remained but they no longer represented 'togetherness'. Instead, they were said to stand for 'equality and interdependence existing between all islands' (CIN 23/6/79). From togetherness in progress to peaceful interdependence; not a radical shift in national values, and probably not widely understood as such. However, the change in colours represented a clear repudiation of the recent past. Nation-building would now have to begin anew, and this time on a sounder economic footing.

ECONOMIC CHANGE

Indeed, the economy did undergo a dramatic transformation during the 1980s. Contrary to initial expectations, there was a major shift away from primary and secondary sectors (agriculture and construction) towards the service sector, associated closely with tourism. By the end of the decade, three quarters of all employment was in the latter sector, and much of the secondary sector employment (for example hotel construction) was also

tourism-related. Employment in tourism-related services (retail trade, restaurants, hotels) increased 55% during the 1982–91 period. By 1991, tourism contributed at least a quarter of all government revenue. The contribution of business and financial services to GDP also increased significantly from 2.4% in 1982 to 12% in 1990 (Asian Development Bank 1992: Commentary A:7).

Associated with this tourism-led economic expansion, was the dramatic growth of an educated, relatively well-paid, local middle class. It has been estimated that between 1976 and 1986 the number of university-educated Cook Islanders increased at least 16 times, and between 1986 and 1991 the number with degrees or diplomas doubled (ibid.: Commentary B:1). Over the 1981–1990 period there was a 20% increase in the number of professional, technical, managerial and administrative workers, and the number of clerical employees increased by 35%. By 1989, a white-collar 'salariate', employed largely by the Government and in the business and financial sectors, comprised 52% of the workforce. On average, the members of this salariate earned more than double the amount of the average wage-earner ($225/week and $121/week respectively [Statistics Office 1989:12]). In general, Cook Islanders' incomes are now relatively high compared with other South Pacific Nations. In 1990, the average per capita income in the Cook Islands was $US 3,400, more than double that of Fiji ($US 1,540) and considerably more than Tonga ($US 800) or Western Samoa ($US 580). There are, however, marked discrepancies within the Cook Islands. The per capita incomes of people living on the main island of Rarotonga are three times higher, on average, than those living in the outer islands (Asian Development Bank 1992:14).

In summary, then, the Davis years were a period of dramatic change; economically, towards a more tourist-dependent, class-divided society and politically, towards less centralized state control. Nationalism, in word and deed, became less significant as a political force—two coalition governments between 1984 and 1987 made the legitimacy of the 'one-dominant-party' state a non-issue—and the development of a national 'culture' was accorded a low priority by the state. Davis' style of leadership was pragmatic

rather than charismatic. Rhetorical eloquence, mixed metaphors and identification with 'the little people' gave way to plain speaking and a certain 'clinical' distance. The future of the nation depended less on mass participation than on sound administration.

THE SECOND WAVE OF ETHNICIZATION, 1989-PRESENT

The return of the Cook Islands Party to power in January, 1989, signalled the return of state-sponsored ethnic nationalism and cultural development. The importance of tourism to the economy and an increased ethnic awareness among a university-educated middle class meant that this time the economic and political incentives were greater than they had been in the mid-1970s. The old Cultural Division was re-established in an expanded form as the Ministry of Cultural Development. The Cook Islands National Arts Theatre, fondly remembered as a symbol of national pride, was reformed. In preparation for the Sixth Festival of Pacific Arts, held in Rarotonga in October, 1992, the construction of an $NZ 11 million Cultural Centre was begun, a second Tumukorero Conference' was held, and the Government sponsored the building of seven ocean-going canoes. Traditional leaders, writers, and artists would soon be drawn into the Festival vortex. A new mood of ethnic confidence was foreshadowed by the new Prime Minister, Geoffrey Henry, when, opening the 1989 Constitution Celebrations, he termed them 'a time to be proud to be Maori' (CIN 29/7/89). The nation was now a Maori nation, the Constitution Celebrations a celebration of Maoriness.

The Ministry of Cultural Development (Tauranga Vananga, Nest of Knowledge) was formally established, under its own Parliamentary Act, in November, 1990. Its work had begun earlier, however, with the appointment, in March, of its first Permanent Secretary. With a staff of between 25 and 30, and a 1990–91 budget of almost $1.5 million dollars, the Ministry rapidly expanded into a high-profile organization comprising seven main divisions: Performing Arts (to organize the Constitution Celebrations and revive CINAT), National Archives, Anthropological Services (to collect and publish oral tradition and

promote research and publication on Cook Islands culture), Material Arts (to develop carving and weaving programmes), and a National Library, National Museum and Audio-visual Unit (all still in the early stages of development). Also under the umbrella of the Ministry were staff employed to organize the Festival of Pacific Arts, a Maori Language Committee, responsible for promoting the public and official use of Maori, and a Research Committee (Ministry of Cultural Development 1991).

From the outset it was envisaged that the Ministry would combine economic and ideological functions. Within the Ministry, as in the tourist industry, national identity, cultural identity and economic development would be brought together without any apparent contradiction. Among its legally defined objectives was the promotion and maintenance of the 'unique cultural national identity of the Cook Islands' (Ministry of Cultural Development Act 1990). However, in its election manifesto of 1989, the CIP was quite open about the commercial value of such promotion:

> As so few do or care to admit, spending for cultural development has a pleasant surprise, a return in real dollars (Cook Islands Party 1989).

During debates in the Legislative Assembly over the Ministry of Cultural Development Bill, Government members were in no doubt that the Ministry would stimulate tourism:

> Do not promote the hotels or whatever, promote the smiles and culture of this country (Cook Islands Legislative Assembly Nov. 1990).
>
> It is not the beauty of our mountains that bring these people. (They come) because they have heard of our culture, not only the dancing and singing, but the Cook Islands personalities, our beautiful smiles, our physical beauty (ibid.).

And on a more ironic note, the Prime Minister argued that,

> Money spent on culture is an investment in ourselves, an investment in the soul of this nation…this Government is not *'akama'* (embarrassed) to be a Cook Islander (ibid.).

The Permanent Secretary was determined that his Ministry would pay its own way as far as possible through sales of books, video and audio tapes, and returns from the copyrighting of cultural performances. In the short term, however, Cook Islanders were asked to bear a 'small' tax increase to fund the Ministry. But, Geoffrey Henry, in his capacity as Minister of Cultural Development, pointed out, that paying for one's culture is really a national act of love:

> We have called on the people of this country to bear the burden of 2 per cent of their earnings to go towards, as our national effort, to the protection and the supporting of our culture…it is an expression of our love for our own culture (ibid. 30/11/90).

National identity had become equated with cultural identity, an essential resource for tourism-led economic development. One member of the opposition did challenge the assumption of national cultural unity and dared to ask if there would be a place for 'other races' and outer-island cultures in the Ministry, but his comments were greeted with laughter and derision—indeed the Prime Minister questioned the member's ethnicity and wondered whether or not he was a 'real Maori' (ibid. 27/11/90).

Coinciding with the establishment of the Ministry of Cultural Development, preparations were begun for hosting the Festival of Pacific Arts. This would be a major cultural showcase for the nation; it would enhance its presence in the tourist market-place. In accordance with the theme of the Festival, 'seafaring Pacific Islanders', public interest and participation centred on the building of seven *vaka moana* (ocean-going canoes); two on Rarotonga and the remaining five in the southern-group islands of Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Aitutaki and Mangaia. The latter five would sail to Rarotonga, using traditional navigation techniques, for the

Festival, and be on display with canoes from Rarotonga and other Pacific nations at a specially built '*vaka* village'.

The Festival encouraged a heightened sense of participation in nationhood. The building and launching of the *vaka,* especially those in the outer islands, involved community meetings, consultations with local experts, the public performance of ritual associated with tree hauling and canoe launching, and a symbolic reproduction of village and gender relations. The hauling of the logs on Atiu, for example, involved men from all five villages:

> They worked in two groups until mid-day, when the last of the two logs were brought to the *marae*. Back at the *marae,* the women were singing, chanting, and dancing while waiting for the men to come back from the beach. About 2. 40 pm the men arrived. The women of each of the five villages served the men with *poi* of different makes and a coconut each (Teiotu 1991).

While not all *vaka* projects attracted such a high level of local participation (that of Sir Tom Davis was essentially a family affair), all became a focus of considerable local and national interest. The *vaka,* whether island, district, or tribal, symbolized both local and national pride. Like the village committees of the 1960s and 1970s, they reinforced apparent continuities between local and national identities. But whereas the nation-building of the village committees entailed the construction of local roads and bridges, the nation-building of the *vaka-project* committees entailed the construction of marketable symbols.

CONCLUSION: THE POSTMODERNIZATION OF NATIONALITY

If the term 'postmodern' has any applicability to the islands of the South Pacific it is probably most relevant to the domain of self-conscious 'culturar' production and consumption. As tradition becomes increasingly commodified (and for some de-authenticated) by governments and tourist interests it is reclaimed by others seeking local autonomy and greater authenticity in the

face of Western cultural imperialism. In other words, the South Pacific postmodern is a contradictory pastiche of cultural shallowness or gloss and a rediscovering of cultural roots; spectres of inauthenticity haunt and impel a reclaiming of authentic tradition; centralized cultural planning comes up against and encourages local cultural 'invention'. As we have seen, in the Cook Islands this situation is the outcome of interrupted, discontinuous state political projects set against a backdrop of an expanding tourist economy.

The postmodernization of Cook Islands nationhood reflected in its simultaneous marketing of tradition and sophisticated financial services is, like all transformations of nationhood, also a globel repositioning of the nation. Cook Islands, or more particularly, Rarotongan society has positioned itself at an international intersection, through which flows a traffic of people (more than 50, 000 tourists per year), capital (the Cook Islands is a recognized tax haven) and ideas (via satellite of peddled by numerous visiting 'experts' and advisers). In the midst of all this a new sense of nationhood is emerging; a sense of living in an increasingly commodified space, of belonging to an imagined community for others—a tourist stopover, a *desti-nation.*

Participation in nationhood increasingly means participation in the tourist industry. The rhetoric of nationhood, which formerly emphasized the values of togetherness and progress, increasingly celebrates a more marketable ethnic pride and cultural heritage. Television advertisements encourage Cook Islanders to show friendly, smiling faces to their visitors in the national interest. National dance competitions are sponsored by international airlines. Local *vaka* carvers feature in tourist brochures. Whereas during the 1960s and 1970s the display of and participation in nationhood were centrally coordinated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a certain decentering of national production has since occured. The Ministry of Cultural Development, the Tourist Authority, the Cook Islands Broadcasting Corporation and the now privately owned *Cook Islands News* promote Cook Islands identity and culture in accordance with more commercially oriented priorities and interests.

The postmodernization of nationhood has been strongly registered in the commodification and pluralization of dance. Up until 1978, dance represented the Cook Islands nation as a young vigorous community under the guidance of the Cook Island Party. Dancing youth embodied the nation's future; their elaborate and precisely coordinated displays conveyed a sense of order, rational planning and unity. Annual competitions, apart from being staged displays of 'togetherness' were also occasions for a state-directed rationalization of dance forms and movements. Dance and nationhood were choreographed and at times inspired by Albert Henry, whose charismatic appeal owed much to his centralized control of the media. With an increasing commodification of culture since 1978 and a cultural renaissance that is placing greater value on pre-colonial tradition dancing youth have come to represent continuity with, rather than progress beyond, a Polynesian past. The professionalization of dance troupes has encouraged greater diversity in dance forms, staging and costumes so that dance now expresses less 'togetherness' and order than plurality and local distinctiveness. Rather than attempting to return to centralized cultural control, the Ministry of Cultural Development has, since 1990, been obliged to work with and not against internal cultural diversity.

As both nation and destination the Cook Islands is indeed increasingly 'unified by the ritualized fantasies of collective expenditure'—in this case the expenditure of others passing through. However this is not to suggest that all forms of national belonging and participation have therefore become less authentic or hollowed out. The nation that is reflected in the windows of tourist buses or the gold-rimmed spectacles of bankers and accountants remains a nation of villages, *vaka* and islands, each vigorously defending their local autonomy. Just beyond the global traffic flows and riding the second wave of ethnicization local titled leaders (*mataiapo* and *rangatira*) are now seeking a greater role in local government. New *marae* are being built, ancient *marae* are being restored, and rituals of title-investiture are becoming more elaborated (Sissons 1994). Thus, what from one perspective might appear as disneyfication or hyperreality can,

from another, be understood as an incentive for local differentiation, for new forms of community participation and new forums for political debate. Indeed, the disrupted transition from modernist party nationalism towards more postmodern styles of identity formation in the Cook Islands could yet be reversed. And why not? This Cook Islands narrative suggests that projects of nationhood are at least as easily abandoned as they are completed.

NOTE

I am grateful to the University of Otago for funding 4 months leave in Rarotonga between January and May 1992. I would also like to thank Kauraka Kauraka, Ron Crocombe, Marjorie Crocombe, Rod Dixon and Richard Walter for their valuable advice and critical comments during the preparation of this article.

CHAPTER SEVEN
'Mornings of the Country': Centering the Nation in Samoan Historical Discourse

Jocelyn Linnekin

In anthropology 'ethnohistory' has conventionally denoted the scholarly reconstruction of indigenous cultures' past, carried out primarily through the analysis of contact-period texts and archival materials. Anticolonial and postmodernist writers in the social sciences have undermined the notion that history is an objective, authoritative account of past events. In similar fashion the notion of ethnohistory has been progressively relativized and contextualized, particularly in recent Pacific history and anthropology. Rather than an objectivist reconstruction of ancient lifeways, ethnohistory has come to refer more broadly to modes of historical discourse—variable ways of constructing, narrating, and interpreting events (see for example Gewertz and Schieffelin 1985: 3). A selective intellectual genealogy of this shift in meaning would include Smith's (1960) concept of 'European Vision', Dening's (1966) discussion of the 'values and assumptions' that 'coloured' early European accounts, Said's (1978) *Orientalism,* and Clifford's (1988) questioning of scholarly narrative authority.

This essay attempts to trace the emergence of a culturally unified 'nation' as a political centre in Samoan historical discourse. While I focus particularly on ostensibly traditional oral genres, my principal point is that it is impossible to treat postcontact Samoan-authored history, whether oral or written, in isolation from the Western historiography of Samoa. Historical discourse about Samoa exemplifies the dilemmas attending the production of knowledge in and about postcolonial, 'Third World' nations (see Prakash 1990). Defining the 'native point of view' is problematic when, as in Samoa, cultural and national identity has developed

through long interaction with Western political visions. Similarly, Samoan ethnohistory—in the sense of cultural constructions of past events—reflects a dialogue with Western conventions about the temporality, narrative form, and political referent of history.

In this paper, therefore, I examine 19th-century and recent varieties of Samoan historical discourse in counterpoint to colonial and postcolonial accounts authored by Europeans, focusing on the theme of centredness—the premise that a national-level cultural and political unit is the referent of history. I will also discuss narrative form and revisionism in the ways that different histories have represented and evaluated particular encounters between Samoans and Westerners. Clearly, postcontact history is produced in the context of ongoing dialogic relations; foreigners write narratives of notable encounters with native peoples, while the indigenous people assert alternative interpretations of those encounters and/or posit other encounters and events as equally significant. In the production of Samoan history at least, revisionism has long been part of the process.

Because of this dialectic in historical discourse, it is difficult to support a simple dichotomy between English and native narrative modes, written and oral history, or between foreign and Samoan 'voices' and points of view. There has been some convergence between Samoan and Western ideas of what constitutes 'history', but in Western Samoa as in other postcolonial states historical points of view are highly differentiated (Prakash 1990; see also Keesing 1990). Narrative authority, standardization, and the appropriate media for indigenous history are subjects of vigorous debate among intellectuals and political leaders. For narrative convenience I use the labels 'indigenous'/'Samoan' and 'foreign'/'Western' to describe authors' origins, but I do so uneasily, acknowledging the expediency of the terms. The discussion will effectively undermine the adequacy of these labels for describing narrative points of view.

Defining the 'native point of view' in postcolonial historiography is problematic in part because indigenous writers are enmeshed in complex political-economic, intellectual, and personal relationships with 'first world' scholars and institutions.

The fact that most indigenous intellectuals are trained in Western academic methods and discursive style underscores the dilemma of defining the 'native voice'. Prakash (1990:388–391) goes so far as to suggest that many 'Third World' histories remain conceptually bound to the colonial project. Nationalist historiography tends to replicate the categories and assumptions of colonial scholarship, self-consciously differentiating itself primarily by inverting invidious value judgements. The representation of Samoan history by foreigners and by Samoans illustrates a dialectical process of interaction through the postcontact period. Samoans who refer to events in the formulas of ceremonial oratory and those who utilize Western academic conventions do so in complex and varied relationship to Western historical and political 'visions' (see Haraway 1989:1–12; Smith 1960)-one of which is the model of 'the nation'.

THE NATION AS POLITY

> We have seen the islands…pass from a state of primitive but happy disorder to a condition of semi-civilized but unhappy confusion…until the bewildered Samoan chiefs, distraught by intrigues, begged that the burden of government might be lifted from them (Masterman 1934:194).

The Western political vision (Dening 1966:37–38) rests on the premise that the referent of history is a nation. The sheer number of works analyzing the 19th-century involvement of the Great Powers in Samoa suggests a parallel between Western historical and strategic concerns, notably a preoccupation with the issue of national unity (see Brookes 1941; Ellison 1938; Kennedy 1974; Masterman 1934; Ryden 1933). Samoa was seen as a chronic problem by the American, British, and German governments until the archipelago was partitioned by international agreement in 1900.[1] The crux of the problem from the Great Powers' point of view was the apparent inability of Samoans to sustain a lasting centralized government. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was punctuated by recurrent civil conflict, as Western settlers and

consuls supported various chiefly contenders in futile attempts to institute a stable national regime with a Samoan king at its head. The event that symbolically summed up the stalemate for Westerners was the famous hurricane disaster of 1889 in which six foreign warships were wrecked at Apia harbour.

Europeans diagnosed Samoan political 'chaos' precisely as the lack of a unified political nation, which they equated with a central government capable of maintaining effective, lasting control over local districts and regional power centres. The epigram cited above, though authored by a sympathetic New Zealand historian, nonetheless aptly illustrates Western thinking about Samoan political society. Sylvia Masterman's characterization of 19th-century Samoa illustrates the belief, shared by diplomats and settlers as well as by colonial scholars, that the indigenous political system was inherently unstable, deficient, and anarchic. Such an interpretation is inseparable from the Great Powers' obsession with the centering project in Samoa, the creation of a national government.

Throughout the postcontact period foreigners have debated the question of Samoan political centralization. The issue was particularly salient for Western diplomats and traders during the civil strife of the late 19th century, and occasioned heated exchanges in the pages of *American Anthropologist* during the 1960s. Scholars have characterized the Samoan chiefly system as one of dispersed authority (Meleise 1987a) in contrast to the highly stratified chieftainships of Hawaii or Tahiti (Linnekin 1991b). Through local councils of chiefs, Samoan villages claim autonomy in political affairs (Meleise 1987a:5; see Western Samoa 1950). The Samoan chief (*matai*) is considered the head and representative of an *'aig* (extended family; see Meleise 1987a:7–8). It is the *'aig* that chooses the successor to the family's chiefly title. The ideology of succession emphasizes personal ability and past service (*tautua;* see Shore 1982:62–66), but there is a patrilineal bias to title succession (Gilson 1970:30–32). Tupua Tamasese (1992), former Western Samoa Head of State, writes that in most cases the 'eldest male of the first formal *usuga* (marriage) succeeds'.

Unlike Hawaiian chiefs, Samoan *matai* were and are not physically or ritually set apart from their people. Many foreign observers have noted the elaborate rules of etiquette and the verbal obeisance paid to Samoan chiefs (see Mead 1930; Shore 1982); many have also noted an incongruence between the oratorical formalities and the *matai's* limited authority beyond the extended family. There is, moreover, a balance of power in the *matai* system between the two kinds of chiefs, *ali'i* 'chiefs' and *tul fale* 'talking chiefs' or 'orators' (Shore 1982:216, 245–246). The orators speak for the chiefs in public gatherings, preside over ceremonial distributions, and legitimate the bestowal of titles. In theory the *ali'i* rank higher than orators, who serve the chiefs and are paid for their services in fine mats. But orators have the material edge in the receipt of ceremonial valuables and historically have been the political manipulators and 'kingmakers' of Samoa. Oral histories narrate the precedent for a ruler of all Samoa, the *Tafa'if* who would garner four paramount titles bestowed by orator groups of different districts. Meleise (1987a:11) argues that much of 19th-century Samoan politics can be understood as a struggle over these titles,

Even some chronologically postcolonial Western scholars characterize the Samoan chiefly system as disintegrative and politically deficient. Paul Kennedy's *The Samoan Tangle* was published in 1974 but nonetheless illustrates key premises and concerns of colonial historiography. The book is island history from the imperial, strategic perspective and the 'tangle' is a Great Power history of diplomats, consuls, big business, and metropolitan governments. In contrast to the wealth of detail about colonial wrangling, Kennedy's characterizations of Samoan politics and social structure are superficial. Samoan chiefly politics are described as 'rather like the Scottish clan system in some respects' (ibid,:2). The analogy was initially opaque to me, but to Kennedy's English audience (the book was originally a doctoral thesis at Oxford) the Scottish clan system evidently represented the archetype of political decentralization. The imperial-centre point of view is also suggested by the fact that the Samoans and the Scots of old are here implicitly classed together as less civilized

peripheral peoples. Like other colonial historians, Kennedy sees the absence of an enduring central government as a fundamental deficiency requiring paternalistic intervention:

> the inherent weaknesses of the native political system and the patent inability of the Samoans to resist the encroachments of the white commercial interests were pointing clearly in the direction of some form of regular [i.e. non-Samoan] administration, if only for the sake of the natives themselves (ibid.:10).

More relativistically perhaps, it could be argued that Samoan political contestation effectively stymied colonial scenarios for development and control (Linnekin 1991b).

ORAL GENRES

To the histories written by Westerners I counterpose varieties of Samoan-authored historical discourse, firstly those that are conveyed in the Samoan language by non-academic experts, then narratives written in English by university-trained scholars adhering to Western academic conventions. Both oral and written Samoan historical genres are embedded in the colonial encounter in complex ways; in their present realizations both promote similar valorizations and assertions about the Samoan polity and culture. It is important to note that the Samoan dialogue with the West is not a recent phenomenon, and here I use 'dialogue' rather literally; Samoans have been telling their history to foreigners since the early postcontact period.

Most historians consider 1830 a watershed date in Samoa's relationship to the West; in that year the missionary John Williams converted the powerful chief Malietoa Vai'inup to Christianity. Even before that, however, Samoans asserted their own interpretations of events in encounters with foreigners, specifically in relation to the La Pérouse affair (Linnekin 1991a). In 1787 the great French explorer stopped at Samoa for twenty-four hours, during which time a watering party from the ships was—in the tale told by Europeans-'massacred' on the beach. In early 19th-century

Europe the La Pérouse story was told, retold, and acted out in numerous ballet-pantomimes, plays, and elegies which consistently promulgated an 'ignoble savage' interpretation of the event (see Smith 1960:6–7). The conventional historical wisdom has been that the La Pérouse affair delayed Western impact by keeping ships away. By the time of John Williams' visit, however, Samoan character was undergoing a rehabil itation in Western portrayals. Importantly, the Samoans actively participated in their own vindication by telling their side of the La Pérouse incident to mariners and missionaries (Linnekin 1991a).

A number of Samoan oral genres and concepts can qualify as historical discourse in that they make reference to past events, though Western collectors and historians have typically classified these as myths, legends, or folklore. Significantly, most Samoans today see them in similar terms—as not-history. As a Western outsider examining constructions of history, I have classed them together. That in so doing I violate the current indigenous logic of classification underscores the point that in the postcontact period there has been a convergence in Western and Samoan notions of what constitutes history. It is unlikely that any pre-European Samoan genre was identical to history in the Western sense of a comprehensive temporal sequence of past happenings. The tradition of Western history—and I use the term 'tradition' advisedly here, to denote a conscious model of past practice (Linnekin 1983)—aspires to an objective, comprehensive, and non-partisan narrative (cf. Cohn 1980).

Samoan historical discourse—which may illustrate characteristics of orally transmitted knowledge in other non-Western societies—does not attempt to be value-free; there are also significant differences of scope. While Western histories aspire to tell the past of a nation, a society, or a population, Samoan oral accounts are more likely to relate selected happenings that are important to a particular family, dynasty, or locale. Perhaps this indigenous precedent of local history explains why even university-trained Samoan historians such as Wendt (1965) have been willing to acknowledge the interested quality of their accounts. Historical relativism appears to have come less readily to Western scholars,

whose narrative convention has been that of a unitary authoritative voice.

Samoan *gafa*[2] (genealogies) include primordial genealogies tracing the origins of the land, the gods, and the major chiefly families as well as privately kept family histories (see Epling 1970). Categorized as traditional history or folklore, *gafa* were collected by early missionaries, several of whom were amateur ethnologists, and by German scholars later in the 19th century, Christianity and foreign intervention in dynastic disputes altered the context and meaning of Samoan genealogies, however, as did the political vision of the Western folklorists. Missionaries and scholars were particularly interested in texts that appeared to be national in scope, relating to all the islands and to the Samoans as one people (see for example Fraser 1892). The collectors thus projected into the past the political ideal of unification pursued by their governments in Samoa. The missionaries were especially intrigued by one primordial tale, "The Genealogy of the Sun' (*O le gafa o le L ;* Hardie MS. ML A368;[3] Pratt 1888), first collected in 1835. The comments of the Rev. Charles Hardie, ca. 1854, may offer insight into the context and meaning of pre-Christian Samoan historical discourse. Hardie wrote that narratives such as 'The Genealogy of the Sun'

> form the traditional or sacred history of the islands. It is designated by the natives as *tau aitu,* belonging to the Gods, & is also considered as one of the most ancient of these legends… This piece is never recited at any of their public meetings, but is kept secret by the orators from every one but their own children … The recitation goes on during the dead of night, when no one is supposed to be in the house, & the orator is in bed with his child. When any noise is heard…the orator ceases. During heathenism it was impossible for any stranger to acquire the least information regarding them. It was with very great difficulty & after urgent solicitation that I obtained any information… It required the express authority of Malietoa (the greatest chief) to induce the orator to allow me to take down from his recitation (Hardie MS. ML A368:105–106).

Christianity appears to have eliminated the sacred meaning of such narratives and transformed them into secular folklore even in the estimation of Samoans who, like Westerners (for example Ella 1897:152; Fraser 1896:23), do not regard them as 'history'. The primary referent of *gafa* today is a family genealogy (Epling 1970). Although Samoan family genealogies are still carefully guarded, secrecy at the national political level was abridged during the late 19th century as a result of Western political meddling, During colonial attempts to establish a 'king' of all Samoa the genealogies of the principal candidates became highly charged issues in public debate (some were even printed in the newspaper) and were the subject of a courtroom battle over the kingship in 1898–99. In this century *gafa* have been written down and diagramed for use in the Land and Titles Court (Epling 1970:175), which was created by the German administration in 1903 to adjudicate disputes over chiefly titles and authority over land (Meleise 1987a:64–88, 183–207).

The origin tales told today are identified as *tala fa'aanamua* or *tala o le vavau* (old-time stories; see Steubel and Herman 1987)[4] or as *f gogo* (fables; see Moyle 1981). Unlike genealogies, these are in narrative rather than verse form, although *f gogo* are partly sung. Westerners and Samoans recounting them to Westerners call such tales 'legends' because they recount supernatural happenings. The temporal referent of these events is specifiable only in genealogical or dynastic terms: the presence of particular characters makes the relative time frame clear to most Samoans, but not to most Westerners. The old-time stories are important to Samoans because they explain the origins of particular chiefly titles, place names, and proverbs, the correct use of which is a crucial index of an orator's expertise and authority.

As an example of this genre, the story of Leutogi (Aumua 1989; Riddell 1932) recounts the origin of the Savai'i Island title Tonumaipe'a and explains the meaning of a well-known proverb. Married to the king of Tonga, Leutogi was angry at her Tongan co-wife, who teased her for being childless. In revenge Leutogi killed the Tongan wife's child. The Tongans put Leutogi up in a tree, intending to burn her, and lit a fire at its base. But a thousand bats

flew over and put out the flames with their urine. When the Tongans returned Leutogi greeted them with the words, 'We meet safely in the fork of the fetau tree' (*Ua tatou fetaia'i i Magafetau soifua*). This proverb is used at a gathering to express the speaker's satisfaction that people have come together again safely. The Tongans then left Leutogi on a barren island inhabited by a demon, but the bats brought her food to eat, giving rise to the chiefly title Tonumaipe'a (the plan from the bats). The demon was surprised when he saw this, giving rise to the title Tilomai (peering in her direction). This title is held by the leader of the untitled men's group associated with Tonumaipe'a. There were no leaves on the island to cover the oven for Leutogi's food, so the oven was covered with pebbles, whence another Savai'i title, Tau'ili'ili (the oven cover of pebbles).

In their form, subject matter and intentionality Samoan genealogies, old-time stories and *f gogo* differ markedly from the conventions of Western history. But Samoans have long been acquainted with the Western concept of history, which they called *tala fa'asolopito,* literally 'tales of events told in succession' (Pratt 1977[1862]:114). I suspect that the translation occurred in that order: that *tala fa'asolopito* is a Samoan rendering of the introduced Western concept of history rather than a native concept that the missionaries translated as 'history'. This inference is supported by the fact that in the first edition of Pratt's dictionary 'history' is translated simply as *tala* (tales). While some forms of Samoan *tala* resembled chronicles, the appearance of the term *tala fa'asolopito* in later editions of the dictionary may reflect the introduction of Western historical form as well as an effort to encourage Samoans to represent their past in this way. Mission education provided an early imperative for a specific concept equivalent to sequential history. The curriculum at the London Missionary Society's Malua Training Institution included 'Church History' and 'Scripture History'. The Reverend James E. Newell's textbook on Church History was entitled *Tala Fa'asolopito* (1886).

In later periods there is documentation of Samoans writing down their own history at the behest of Westerners. Mission-

educated Samoans played principal roles in this endeavour as interlocutors and translators, both linguistic and cultural. One such prominent figure was Te'o Tuvale, a Samoan pastor's son who held numerous positions in both native and colonial governments from 1878 until his death in 1919 (Davidson 1967: 70, 86). Tuvale and his brothers were pioneers in the recording of indigenous knowledge; they compiled the first book of Samoan ceremonial greetings (*fa'alupega*) published by the London Missionary Society in 1915 (ibid.:70). In his last post as government secretary under Colonel Robert Logan, the New Zealander who commanded the British Military Occupation, Tuvale recorded what may be the first Samoan-authored written history of the islands (Tuvale 1918). The terms with which he introduces the manuscript are revealing:

> Different versions of the ancestors and of the beginning of Samoa together with a record of events in past times down to the present day.
>
> Although the stories and opinions from different districts differ and lack a single origin, yet they have been recorded. The recording has not been done under the eye of a critic for Samoan stories in the days of darkness were treasured in the heart and not written.
>
> I, Teo Tuvale, have tried to gather these stories over many years for my own use and interest. Colonel Robert Logan intimated to me that he wished me to put on record the story of happenings in Samoa from ancient times to the present day in order that they should be issued in printed form, and I attempt to obey his wish with this object in view (Tuvale 1918).

Significantly, the first chapters of Tuvale's history are in the form of genealogies. They trace the descent of the important ancestral figures of Samoa and resemble 19th-century *gafa* as well as the Biblical 'begats' of Genesis even to the numbering of verses, each numbered line recounting marriages and incidents occurring in a single generation. However, *gafa* were and are by no means restricted to recounting marriages and descent, i.e. genealogical events in the Western sense (Epling 1970:175). Like the *gafa*

recorded by 19th-century missionaries, the content of Tuvale's early history overlaps with that of *tala fa'aanamua* and other genres regarded today as secular fables and tales. These historical styles differ not so much in content as in narrative form. Tuvale's narrative recounts the origins of titles, proverbs, and place names, and explains particular named events. His last chapter, however, entitled 'A record of events in Samoa since 1822', is a chronological, extensively annotated list of postcontact events. Tuvale's historical notes thus begin with *gafa* and end with *tala fa'asolopito*—'history' in the Western sense.

'MORNINGS OF THE COUNTRY'

The oral Samoan historical genres accessible today have evident continuities with pre-European narrative forms and are self-consciously traditional. Their foremost practitioners are talking chiefs or orators (*tul fale*), indigenous experts in formal speechmaking (*l uga*) and ceremonial etiquette who are seen as particularly engaged in cultural reproduction, among other personal and political projects. In contrast to *tala fa'asolopito* as comprehensive, sequential history stands the concept of *taeao o le atunu'u* (mornings/events of the country), which are recited in ceremonial oratory. A requisite part of Samoan ceremonial speeches is the mention of particular past occasions, the *taeao,* literally 'mornings' (see Duranti 1981:372–373; Schwehr 1952: 128–129; T tupu 1987:9–12, 23–25). These are not retold but are simply identified by place name such as 'the morning at Samana'. In the structure of Samoan orations the *taeao* section usually follows the greetings to those assembled and the thanks to God. The events are recalled in a form such as: 'How many mornings have the chiefs of Samoa met in assembly like this? There was the morning at Sau , the morning at Saman , the morning at Nam '.[5] The events memorialized in *taeao* may be horrible or pleasant. The former include pre-Christian wars and instances of 'bloodletting' and cannibalism. The unsavoury *taeao* serve to remind listeners of the contrast between the Christian era and the preceding 'dark' times (*fa'ap uliuli*). Most of the positive 'mornings' commemorate the coming of the 'good word' (T tupu 1987:10). Sectarian

rivalries are usually overlooked when citing the gospel 'mornings': the most frequently cited events are identified by the places where the first London Missionary Society, Methodist, and Roman Catholic missionaries arrived. The 'morning at Mataniu Feagai ma le Ata,' for example, commemorates the arrival of John Williams at the village of Sapapali'i by invoking the ceremonial name of that village's open central space (*malae*). An orator living in New Zealand distinguishes between 'secular' and 'gospel' *taeao* and notes that the Christian events predominate in Samoan oratory today 'because they are regarded as the *taeao* of salvation, of Samoa's first real dawn and daylight' (T tupu 1987:10).[6]

It is important to note that the enumeration of *taeao* is part of elite public discourse. *F gogo* and tales of old may be recounted in a familial context, such as to children at bedtime, but *taeao* belong to the ceremonial language of chiefs. While *tala* 'histories' recount events sequentially in narrative form, *taeao* are selected events valued as important to 'the country' (*o le atunu'u)*. As an orator explained to me, *tala fa'asolopito* refer to 'anything at all that happens' and 'everything that happened on this day and that day… all the things are written down'. Although significance enters into this definition of 'history', the emphasis is on comprehensiveness and on temporal sequence. The specific mention of the written medium suggests, again, that the category *tala fa'asolopito* represents the Samoan conceptualization of Western historical form. What is missing from 'history' but embodied in *taeao* is cultural meaning and value.

Tala fa'asolopito were and are often intended to explain Samoa and its past to the unknowledgeable. These narrative histories are accessible to and in many cases aimed at a Western audience, or an audience of younger Samoans pursuing Western-modelled education (It is relevant to note here that Samoan education is conducted in the English language except in classes for the youngest children). *Taeao* lack this informative purpose. In comparison to Western history and to *tala fa'asolopito,* there is no necessity to be comprehensive, detailed, or sequential when citing *taeao*. These events are mentioned, not recounted, because they do not need to be described to a Samoan audience. Samoans know

what happened on 'the morning at Saman ' or, if they do not, they understand in general terms what the invocation attempts to convey. Moreover, an orator selects certain *taeao* to include in a speech on a particular occasion (Schwehr 1952:129; T tupu 1987: 25); the ability to choose and place the events appropriately in the context of the address is a measure of the orator's skill and reflects on his public stature. The 'mornings' are intended to evoke and remind the listeners of the meaning of certain historic occasions. They are therefore contextually important in the formal greeting speeches exchanged by villages or groups, because the choice of events can set the tone for the transactions to follow (Duranti 1981:379). As a historical genre *taeao* thus incorporate value, meaning, and context.

The popularity of particular 'mornings' in Samoan oratory has been historically contingent. The invocation of *taeao* can be understood as a way in which Samoans have conveyed changing messages about themselves. These events may carry as much symbolic weight or allegorical meaning for Samoans as did the La Pérouse 'massacre' and the Apia hurricane disaster for earlier generations of Europeans. Such meanings change with the historical and political context, and particular events accordingly begin to seem more or less suitable for mention. An orator explained to me that the unpleasant and gruesome reminders of Samoa's pre-Christian past used to be cited to emphasize the contrast with the enlightened present. But today the positive rather than the negative events are emphasized, and Samoans consider the Christian *taeao* to be the most salutary of all.

Sherry Ortner (1973:1340) identified 'summarizing symbols' as those which 'synthesize a complex system of ideas' and thereby come to stand for the whole; their function is 'a crystallization of commitment' (ibid.:1342). *Taeao* can be described as 'summarizing events'. These evocative historical benchmarks are part of Samoans' self-definition in the modern international arena. The prevalence of gospel 'mornings' in oratory asserts an image of Samoans as a politically unified, culturally conservative, and Christian people—an image that valorizes Samoa in comparison to many other, wealthier nations. Significantly, the referent of

'mornings' is now 'the country'. The invocation of *taeao* thus accomplishes a symbolic 'centering' and suggests a vision of collective identity, if not political unity, that is similar to that of colonial and nationalist historiography.

REVISIONIST AND NATIONALIST HISTORIES

Other than Samoan authorship, forms of oral historical discourse such as *taeao* and *gafa* appear to have little in common with the histories authored by Western-trained Samoan scholars. As might be expected, the latter utilize the sequential narrative format, speak in the 'objective' authoritative voice of academic history, and write in English (Eteuati 1984; Meleise 1987a; Meleise et al. 1987; Wendt 1965). These postcolonial indigenous historians adhere to the formal criteria of Western scholarship but attempt to assert a native cultural and political point of view, particularly by critically evaluating the actions of Westerners in Samoa. As Meleise (1987b:vii) points out, however, exactly what constitutes a 'native point of view' in the postcolonial context is problematic. Modern Samoan scholarship differentiates itself from foreign-authored historiography by valorizing and recontextualizing events and behaviour that colonial scholars represented as destructive, deficient, or uneconomic.

The issue of the 'native voice' is complicated, however, by a third term in the historiography of Samoa: the revisionist, 'island-oriented' perspective identified particularly with J.W. Davidson (1966, 1967) and his students (for discussion see Howe 1977, Thomas 1990). These predominantly non-native scholars, most of them writing from the British colonial periphery, situated their work in explicit contradistinction to Eurocentric colonial discourse. In narrative practice this entailed valorizing indigenous societies and recontextualizing events in native cultural terms. Though produced in the colonial context, this sympathetic revisionist historiography was vocally anti-colonial and nationalist. These writers asserted the cultural sophistication of indigenous societies and the competence of native political leaders (see for example Davidson 1967, Gilson 1970); not surprisingly,

they explicitly and implicitly advocated political independence and nationhood for Pacific colonies. Davidson, for example, was personally involved in research and planning for the decolonization of Western Samoa.

Indigenous nationalists often assert that non-native writers cannot capture the native point of view, however sincere their efforts at cultural sensitivity and informed representation. But most university-trained Samoan historians have been educated in Australia and New Zealand, where their mentors were the 'island-oriented' liberal revisionists. Indigenous scholars thus face the difficulty of defining themselves as a distinct voice within a discourse that is already critical of Western colonialism and colonial historiography. Modern Samoan scholars are engaged in a revisionist project similar to that of the 'island-oriented' historians, but they also pursue an 'authentic' Samoan past (Meleise 1987b:vii-viii; compare Prakash 1990:391) and thus face the question whether anticolonial critique is sufficient to constitute a native voice. Whether it is possible or desirable to assert 'a' unified indigenous voice is also problematic—a point I return to below.

The Samoan historians Eteuati, Meleise , and Wendt all analyzed aspects of the colonial period in their scholarly work. Wendt (1965) and Eteuati (1984) wrote their Master's theses on the Mau rebellion against New Zealand in the 1920s and early 1930s. Meleise 's dissertation and later published book discussed the German administration and the Mau but primarily analyzed the Land and Titles Court as an agent of social change. Wendt's thesis explicitly critiques the premise of 'objective' history, and he later rejected academic history as a narrative medium in favour of literature. As Meleise (1987a) acknowledges, indigenous scholars who continue to write sequential narrative history face the difficulty of defining a point of view that is distinct not only from Eurocentric colonial scholarship but also from sympathetic liberal revisionism. Contemporary Samoan intellectuals do not categorically reject foreign-authored history, but their analyses tend to be even more critical of Western actions in the Pacific than those of non-native revisionist historians (see Meleise 1985). The difference between their perspective and that of 'island-oriented'

historiography is thus contrapuntal and additive, an accumulation of corrections.

Collaborating with other Samoan intellectuals, Meleise also edited a short general history of Samoa (Meleise et al. 1987). *The Making of Modern Samoa* appeals particularly to academics, but the latter work is intended specifically as a readable introductory history for Samoans and for foreigners. In the Preface Meleise (1987b:vii) outlines some of the differences he perceives between Western and Samoan views of history:

> For Samoans, knowledge is power, and the most powerful knowledge is historical knowledge: treasured and guarded in people's heads, in notebooks locked in boxes and *matai's* briefcases or with their precious mats under mattresses. The valuable histories of families, lands, genealogies, villages and events long ago are family property…
>
> Even 'common' historical knowledge such as well-known legends, are controversial. Each has many versions…

Modern Samoan-authored accounts resemble Western histories in their methodology and narrative form, Meleise suggests, because they utilize the same sorts of written materials: 'we have little of the great, rich fund of historical information of our people locked in their heads and note books. We have relied extensively on facts from documentary sources' (ibid.:viii). Like foreign-authored history, this Samoan product asserts—albeit with reservations—the cultural unity and shared past of the archipelago as a 'centre' of historical discourse, Moreover, that Western Samoa is the heartland and the primary referent of 'Samoa' seems self-evident to most Samoans, who see the less developed, materially poor, but independent Samoan state as the bastion of tradition. In this sense all the modern Samoan-authored histories discussed here-oral and written-are engaged in a nationalist project.

THE CENTERING PROJECT

There are significant discontinuities of form and scope between Samoan oral historical discourse and the histories written by

Western-trained Samoan scholars. All of the written genres of Samoan history discussed herein participate in a centering project that is akin to the 19th-century Great Power concern with establishing a unified Samoan nation. Modern scholars, both Samoan and Western, agree that there is 'a' Samoan culture and in the postcolonial era a nation—Western Samoa—that most fully embodies and reproduces that culture. This is a powerful idea indeed, reiterated by ethnographers of Samoa and shared by most Samoans. Meleise (1987b:viii), however, expresses ambivalence about the referent of Samoan history, acknowledging that 'the history of the villages and families of Samoa…will be a "real" Samoan history in another sense'.

The same orators who invoke the 'mornings of the country' also insist that every village and district has its own ways (cf. Meleise et al. 1987:10, 31). An oft-quoted proverb states that 'Samoa is a bony fish' (O *Samoa o se i'a iviivia*), meaning that there are many local variations of custom and ceremonial etiquette and implying that these differences can be the source of contention, like little bones that stick in the throat. The word usually translated as 'culture' (*aganu'u*) literally means 'the ways of villages', and is often paired with another word, *agaifanua,* meaning 'the ways of (different) lands/regional lifeways'. In this sense Samoans have long had a decentred view of their own history and customs, and oral historical genres represent an indigenous decentred discourse. But in the colonial and postcolonial periods these histories too have responded to the centering project, as proverbs and *taeao* have come to resonate with the referent of 'the country'.

There is an obvious tension in Samoan ceremonial oratory between assertions of cultural and national unity and an insistence on local precedence and individuality. In the modern political context the potentially contradictory rhetoric can be seen as a way in which chiefs articulate their position vis-à-vis the state. Until the German colonial period, groups of *matai* located in certain high-ranking villages functioned as regional power brokers and 'kingmakers'. The German administration aggressively sought to emasculate these traditional power centres, with some success. Moreover, the postcolonial state has severely abridged the law-

making and judicial functions once lodged in the council of village chiefs. Oratorical assertions of local independence may therefore serve as warnings or reminders aimed at the national government.

I suggest, however, that a tension between centralized and dispersed authority is not new, and can be traced to pre-European Samoan political history. Though chiefly titles are bestowed by families and associated with particular villages and lands, certain prominent titles—such as the four making up the status of *Tafa'if* —*have* long been recognized as carrying the potential for paramount authority. Pre-European Samoan history records few *Tafa'if* , and the role appears to have conveyed ceremonial precedence rather than effective administrative power. But even before the era of significant European presence, some ambitious chiefs contended for paramount authority by acquiring high titles, conquering rivals, and courting regional power brokers. During the factional conflicts of the 19th century the Western powers promoted 'kingship' as a solution to Samoan dispersed authority, which they viewed as a hindrance to orderly trade and agricultural development. In pursuit of their own goals, Samoan chiefly contenders creatively appropriated the Western model as the object of political strivings, conflating 'king' with *Tafa'if* . The centering project became particularly salient for Samoans in the 19th-century kingship disputes, but in a form that was neither wholly indigenous nor wholly foreign.

Further, the identity and the *concept fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan way) is not simply a colonial artifact, the invention of foreign administrators and scholars, but has a long pre-European history. The notion of a 'posited essence' (Prakash 1990:394) that is Samoa must be historicized in the context of a much earlier opposition with Tonga (see, for example, the Leutogi story summarized above). Samoan cultural identity was variably constructed during centuries of exchange, intermarriage, and conflict with Tonga. Oral histories recount a period when the Tongans ruled Samoa. Although the nature of the political relationship is unclear (see Meleise et al. 1987:31), Samoans still refer to the era as the Tongan 'bondage' (*pologa*) and count the expulsion of the Tongans as one of the most celebrated events in their history. The event accounts for the

origin of the title Malietoa, which rose to paramount political importance in the 19th century. As the Samoans drove the Tongans into the sea, the Tongan king turned and praised them with the words, *Malie toa, malie tau* (Brave warrior, well fought; see Steubel and Herman 1987:130–132). Samoan nationalist discourse—in the sense of anticolonial indigenous valorization—is therefore not new.

'The nation' is an evolving construct in historical discourse about Samoa. Since the publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) it has become commonplace for scholars to assert that nations are historical fictions. Anderson's deconstruction targeted modern nation-states and did not rule out the existence of 'primordial' cultural affiliations. In this chapter, however, I have attempted to historicize and to some extent destabilize 'Samoa' as a primordial given—as a society with a homogeneous culture founding a sovereign nation. The notion of 'Samoa' predates European contact. But given the emphasis on local custom and precedence, it is likely that the category 'Samoa' was ambiguous and politically contested even in pre-European times. In mythic histories Samoa appears as a contrastive term in a domain that includes, notably, Tonga and Fiji. Through prolonged interaction with a different set of foreigners, the concept *'o le atunu'u* (the country) crystallized as a referent for Samoa, eventually dovetailing with the Western model of 'the nation'.

Both colonial and nationalist historians embrace the premise that a society 'having' a distinct culture should eventually become an independent, centralized nation. This shared vision of political destiny highlights the disjunction between indigenous oral histories and written academic accounts. In Indian historiography, members of the Subaltern Studies group have argued that nationalist history is in most cases elitist, both in its authorship and in its concern with the politics of dominant groups and classes (Guha 1982; Prakash 1990; Spivak 1985). The subaltern historians argue that an anticolonial posture is insufficient to constitute decolonized history. The point is analogous to Donna Haraway's (1989: 310) observation that feminist history, if it simply asserts a 'woman's point of view', is not the same as 'deconstructive' analysis which

destabilizes dominant categories. In the historiography of Samoa, 'the nation' is one of those dominant categories.

Both colonial and nationalist historians see 'the nation' as the end result of political strivings; modern chiefly orators participate in the task of centering the Samoan nation in public discourse. In a sense, a Samoan historiography of difference—if it foregrounded local interpretations and priorities—would be closer to precolonial notions of history. For all the theoretical worthiness of purging Orientalist and essentialist categories, however, the political implications of a decentred historiography are problematic for indigenous elites and for the foreign scholars who dominate academic scholarship in and about the Pacific islands. 'The nation' may be an 'invented' essentialism and a colonial artifact, but it is difficult to envision a viable political alternative for island societies,

The question points to a debate that cannot be pursued here, about the political uses and potential effects of history. Liberal scholars typically support self-determination for indigenous peoples and advocate autonomous nationhood—despite the attendant problems—for Pacific islands societies. But this vision presumes that 'indigenous' is an unproblematic category. As Keesing's (1990) account and the ongoing Bougainville insurgency attest, the liberal goals may be mutually contradictory, Many foreign scholars—especially those resident in the Pacific-corroborate nationalist interpretations of events (cf. Guha 1989: 309), and are discomfited by rhetorical attempts to 'decentre' any discourse authored by indigenous people. Subaltern historiography explicitly challenges this uneasy collusion between revisionist academics and indigenous postcolonial elites, and raises issues that are at present rarely discussed openly by Pacific intellectuals. Whether it is desirable, productive, or functional to foreground internal differences in the construction of island histories remains an open and intrinsically political question.

NOTES

Ancestral drafts of this paper were begun when I was a Research Fellow at Macquarie University, and I am most grateful to that institution for its support. Research in the Mitchell Library and the

Alexander Turnbull Library was funded by a Grant-in-Aid from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. I extend gratitude and admiration to Aumua Mataitusi for tutelage in the Samoan language and ceremonial etiquette, and to John Mayer for making the opportunity possible. For insights into Samoan culture I also thank Vaisagote Isaako, Lemalie Vaisagote, Leiataua Iosefa, and the members of their family in Manono, Western Samoa. Thanks go to Stewart Firth, Ton Otto, and Caroline Ralston for comments on earlier versions.

1. Strictly speaking, the colonial period in Samoa began in 1900 when Western Samoa became a German colony and the eastern islands came under the administration of the United States Navy. German rule ended in 1914 when New Zealand forces acting under British orders occupied Western Samoa. While American Samoa remains an unincorporated United States territory, Western Samoa gained independence in 1962.
2. The 'g' in Samoan orthography represents a soft 'ng' sound, as in the middle of the English word 'singing.'
3. Mitchell Library manuscript number.
4. *Fa'aanamua* can mean either 'ancient' or 'in the style of ancient or former times.'
5. These three 'mornings' refer to the story of the twin girls Taem and Tilafaig , who swam to Tutuila and surprised a gathering of chiefs. Their mention in a speech likens the occasion to another 'morning' when people travelled a great distance to meet (Schultz 1980:108).
6. The book was originally a Master's thesis at the University of Auckland.

EPILOGUE
Nations' Endings: from Citizenship to Shopping?

Nicholas Thomas

The insecure character of nationhood in the Pacific must loom large among the broader themes of this collection. To be sure, not all Pacific states encounter the failure of national coherence that seems so conspicuous in Papua New Guinea, as Jeffrey Clark's chapter demonstrates from a Southern Highlands perspective, and as Australian readers of this book might find asserted more generally, and with alarming frequency, in major dailies such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In all other cases, however, national narratives seem uneasily calqued onto stories of origin or stories of religious transformation, to which local populations appear more deeply attached. Nation-states seem profoundly divided—by virtue of the contentious gendering of their symbolism and their traditions, as well as, perhaps more obviously, because of their internal regional differentiation.

These illustrations of the failure of a project of modernity in the South Pacific ought not be taken as reiterations of the colonialist view that Pacific peoples (and others) were 'not ready' for political independence. This proposition is being resuscitated, not least because Papua New Guineans are often now quoted, lamenting the end of colonialism and expressing the hope that the Australian administration may yet return. So far, anthropologists and historians have regarded statements of this kind as simply too embarrassing to discuss, which is surely a symptom of our inability to see beyond the grand narratives that begin before contact and culminate with decolonization.

We suggested in the introduction to this volume that the very tenuousness of national narratives in the Pacific might provide the

basis for a distinctive comment on wider developments. The idea that there is some basic incompatibility between Melanesian sociality and the cultural and political forms of modern nationhood is inadequate not only because it partakes of the old 'not ready' thesis, but because it assumes that nations formed smoothly within 'the' West and remain secure. In this epilogue I contradict the second part of this assumption. I propose playfully that in certain ways Melanesian societies anticipate European developments more than they follow them or mimic them; but behind this parody of grand narratives lies a more serious point.

Eric Hobsbawm (1992), among other influential intellectuals, has suggested that nationalism is coming to an end. Lofty pronouncements concerning the beginnings and endings of institutions and epochs have always had a special appeal in the humanities and social sciences, but this claim is particularly attractive for seeming so patently unacceptable. Referring to the proliferation of new separatist nationalisms, no less prominent a commentator in the field than Benedict Anderson has stated, 'The reality is quite plain: the "end of the era of nationalism," so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time' (1983: 12). Since the first edition of *Imagined Communities* was published, the movements and secessions that support the claim have, of course, multiplied dramatically. But one of the causes of this situation—the end of the eastern bloc-has produced a new contender for the title of 'the most universally legitimate value' in contemporary political life: the market. The point is not simply that Communist Party rule has been abandoned, but that Communist regimes that remain secure (such as those in China and Vietnam) have, virtually without exception, now embraced programmes of privatization and deregulation, as have the parties of the left within the Western capitalist democracies. The other question that might be raised, with the hindsight of the present, is whether the pervasiveness of ethnonationalisms has any relation to the legitimacy of nation-ness. Might not the drawn-out horror of the former Yugoslavia suggest to many that the flame is not worth the candle?

Even at the time that Anderson wrote, however, there was wide agreement about three propositions—the first two of which his book became closely identified with. First, nations were cultural inventions; second, as he wrote, nationalism and related terms were 'notoriously difficult to define'; and third, only a handful of former or existing nations ever corresponded with ideals such as 'every nation a state and only one state for the entire nation' (Hobsbawm 1992:4). If something is vague, continually available for recreation, and in contradiction with the social and political circumstances of the world, it doesn't seem obvious that 'the reality' about it—here specifically the prospect of its ending—can be 'quite plain'.

Anderson proceeded to suggest that the confusion about nationalism arises partly because it has been categorized as a political ideology equivalent to fascism or liberalism rather than as an anthropological generality such as religion or kinship. This is a surprising move, because while anthropologists have generally taken the latter to be social universals, it is always acknowledged that nationalism has a beginning 'in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm' (1983:16). If nationalism arose at this particular time, succeeding an Ancien Regime, it might be assumed that it would be caught up with other Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment social and ideological forms, and that its life might be linked with theirs. Hence, while Anderson in effect renders nationalism as a singular variant of the universal process of imagining collectivities, there is at least equal scope for locating it in more restricted terms. If nationalism is not merely distinctively modern, but rather one of the constitutive projects of modernity, then the internationalized disequilibria of postmodernity must distort it.

I stress that I do not argue that nationhood is pervasively displaced or succeeded by something else. That proposition would be the counterpart to the postulate of an epochal distinction between modernity and postmodernity. Though often appealed to, such a distinction remains contentious and problematic in many ways: too many of the phenomena supposedly typical of the

postmodern have evident antecedents in modernity. Postmodernism is best understood as a kind of metamodernism in which the social and cultural forms of modernity have become increasingly explicit and pluralized, which is to say, they retain force and presence but are in various ways destabilized or qualified, For the purposes of this argument, at any rate, I suggest that beneath the sound and fury of political upheaval, there is a deeper shift in the forms that identities and polities can take. 'From citizenship to shopping' alludes to a central feature of this transition from modern nationality to postmodern culture. It is a generalized version of the transition Jeffrey Sissons discerns, in his chapter in this volume, from nation-building in the Cook Islands to the commodization of culture toward the making of a tourist destination.

Since, in the past, I have made what Marilyn Strathern would call 'an easy living' out of the denunciation of evolutionary narratives in anthropology, I cannot expect this 'from…to…' fiction to be taken very seriously; despite its reversals it can only be Eurocentric, and it can only be untrue to the historical coexistence and sequencing of geographically situated political and ideological forms. But the very inadequacy of the story may enable us to provincialize Europe (in the sense advocated by Chakrabarty [1992]) by establishing the parochial and limited character of its historical trajectories, in a more radical fashion than is possible if our studies are governed by the anthropological sense that all cultures have their imagined communities.

A key premise of this discussion is that modern nation-making may follow from ethnonationalism but amounts to considerably more than separatism. Anderson's argument that nationalism originated among American creoles, and was cultivated specifically by bureaucrats and printers, is suggestive and important, but it is odd that he makes little of the obvious point that these nationalisms were basically reactive projects against larger political entities, namely the vestiges of the Spanish and Portuguese seaborne empires. If movements for political autonomy typically have the objective of establishing a nation-state, nation-making entails not only sovereignty, which is a property of other types of polities as well as nations, but also requires the cultivation of civic

consciousness and patriotic loyalty. Here I follow Hobsbawm, who has emphasized that nationalism cannot be meaningfully discussed unless a conjunction of nation and state is at issue, and unless some form of political duty and public obligation is postulated (1990:9–10). The suggestion here is not that patriotism is necessarily pervasive or deep-seated, but rather that it is projected as a model, and has at least limited salience. This relation of people to the state is that of citizenship, and it is linked with the political baptism of the lower classes which Anderson notes was conspicuously absent from the early wave of creole nationalism.

While anti-colonial, anti-imperial, and anti-national nationalisms may construct the unity of the imagined community in heterogeneous and often limited terms, the constructive and expansive moment of nation-making entails a socialization of society, or diverse and ideally pervasive citizen-making projects. Modernity is marked by what Foucault has called governmentality —the application of techniques of inspection and planning to a whole range of institutions that are conceived of as elements of a political economy and moral community. These amount to colonizing operations within the Western societies that are simultaneously colonizing others, and frequently parallel them, as is conspicuous for example in sanitation, which takes a 'traditional' social order as an afflicted body that requires diagnosis and refashioning. Reform aims to install a whole array of technical knowledges and procedures in specific social domains while simultaneously remaking the population as actors with a sense of responsibility toward the collectivity. Education reinforces the relationship between the abstracted collectivity and the individual through the exemplary lives of national heroes, the national literary canon, and the geography that enables pupils to conceive of their country as a mapped totality consisting of diverse but complementary and progressively developed parts. Linguistic education ideally suppresses provincial dialects (or rather languages such as Breton that are relegated to dialect status) and prescriptively normalizes one such as Bauan Fijian. The generality of citizenship both mobilizes particular regional, religious, and cultural traditions for their peculiar content, and constantly

disguises the divisions internal to the national-ethnic singularity that the nation notionally embraces.

Prognostications of the waning of nationalism need to be specified, and it might be suggested that the projects of nation-making and of reproducing citizenship are prejudiced for two reasons. The first arises from the fact that governmentality has been contingently rather than necessarily directed at the fashioning of national communities. Its bureaucratic techniques are often directed at social relations, at regions, and at populations, rather than at 'society' or 'the nation'. Though it may frequently require particular contracts and localized forms of regulation, its apparatuses are technically oriented and lack a general stake in grand political contracts or narratives. Accordingly, projects of regulating health, environmental management, and commerce are, to an increasing degree, appropriated by supranational entities which become increasingly powerful. Though these agencies may have interests in certain levels of order, they generally have no special investment in nationality and, in fact, frequently exacerbate domestic tensions by compelling national leaderships to impose unpopular fiscal and social policies. While the projects of governmentality are not themselves waning—but rather ramifying—they are increasingly directed by transnational institutions toward transnational objectives, such as the establishment of global copyright regimes and the containment and management of HIV infection. Even where the implementation of policy is primarily the work of national governments rather than international banks or aid organizations, those policies are often designed and negotiated through international fora. Where these strategies do not positively undermine national civic consciousness, they rarely enhance or reproduce it.

A second development arguably undermines the continuing project of nation-making in a more profound way. I have in mind the widelycited expansion of consumer society. Citizenship could be seen as one of the grand narratives that Lyotard finds to have withered in the face of advanced liberal capitalism, that 'valorized the individual enjoyment of goods and services' (1984:38). Frederick Jameson, too, has accorded consumerism a pivotal

location in the emergence of the postmodern (1983:124–125). While Jameson followed earlier writers such as McLuhan in anticipating 'universal standardization', the notion that globalization entailed homogenization is now largely discarded. As Daniel Miller argued in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987), consumer goods can be appropriated and recontextualized in a variety of ways that permit differentiated, localized, and sometimes resistant identities.

I follow Miller in understanding consumption as a crucial theatre for the construction of contemporary identities—personal, regional, national, international, sexual, occupational, subcultural and political; 'crucial' because the expansion and differentiation of consumption practice has led to a kind of mass enfranchisement in the domain of consumption that has no counterpart in the opportunities available to most people for more explicitly political forms of self-expression. While social critics of the left may persist in regarding this phenomenon as one of regrettable displacement, it is hardly surprising that most people have embraced forms of personal and collective representation that are conducive to the satisfaction of immediate personal desires, when the wider theatre of politics is pervaded by estrangement and frustration, and is, in many respects, no more generally available as a domain of self-expression and accomplishment than the various forms of high art.

Robert Foster has creatively developed elements of Miller's work in an argument that consumption is a key domain for the formation of national consciousness in Papua New Guinea (1995). I agree that insofar as nations are now created and recreated as cultural entities, consumption practices are one of the primary arenas within which this takes place; beer brands, beverages such as kava in Vanuatu and Fiji, certain women's artifacts such as bilums, and T-shirts that often feature flags, emblems, and simply countries' names are all quotidian and pervasive bearers of nationality. There are two points, though, that might be made about the representation and objectification of national identity through common items of material culture, foodstuffs, beverages, and the like. The first is that these objects generally bear nationality rather than nationalism. They may implicitly evidence a

positive construction of being *man ples* or *woman ples,* that is, a certain chauvinism rather than patriotism or some marked commitment to the nation-state. The second is that much consumption relates to non-national identities or identities that positively subvert nationality.

It is surely not necessary to document this in detail. Gay identities are hardly national but both subcultural and international; this is also true of youth subcultures, especially those shaped by black American aesthetics. On the other hand, commodities that possess unambiguous national signatures (such as fluffy kangaroos and koalas in Australia, and kiwi toys in New Zealand) are frequently sought after not by nationals but by tourists. So far as national but non-folkloristic objects are concerned, shifts in international ownership and production have in many cases undermined the particular associations of what were formerly emblematic national products. This may be most conspicuous in the motor vehicle business (the Holden is now no more Australian a car than many Toyotas), but in terms of national legends it is worth mentioning that Vegemite—allegedly once taken by Australians to Europe in considerable quantities, because it was unavailable there—is no longer Australian owned.

One of the biggest shifts in marketing strategies over the last decade has been the promotion of products which are allegedly ecologically undamaging, recyclable, made of unbleached paper, without CFCs, and so on. Despite the availability of the Australian bush as an environmental trope, it is striking that advertising of this kind within Australia generally refers to a generic rainforest, or similarly non-specific images of whales and dolphins, inviting consumers to understand themselves, not as conservers of a particular local environment, but as members of a global green coalition.

We noted in the introduction that the larger ethnic categories that are salient in some parts of the Pacific are not those of nations but of the old geographic, ethnological and cultural divisions of Melanesia and Polynesia. In the effort to provide some of the ideological raw material for a post-independence culture that is described in Ton Otto's chapter, Bernard Narokobi aimed to

define not a Papua New Guinean but a Melanesian way. And there has since been much talk, in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia as well as in Papua New Guinea, of 'Melanesian' culture. This makes sense in so far as it cannot be suggested that Tannese and Malekulans have much in common that Erromangans and Malaitans or Banks Islanders and Bougainvilleans do not, but it is striking that the commonality appealed to by national leaders corresponds not with the borders of the state but with a wider cultural region.

This is an intriguing reversal of the predicament facing the Melanesians' former colonizers. J.G.A.Pocock has recently referred to the way in which the current ideology of 'Europeanness' has 'enjoined the rejection of previously distinct national histories without proposing a synthetic or universal history to take their place. When the British are enjoined to con sider themselves "European" it is usually with the implication that they should not consider their history as in any way distinctive' (1991:7). While the centre is struggling to obliterate the memories that stand in the way of a posthistorical, postnational, postmodern market and superstate, Pacific societies apparently possess no national identities that need to be forgotten. With a multiplicity of different cultures, and with larger identifications that are regional rather than merely national, Melanesians appear already equipped with the modes of identification demanded of Europeans. Needless to say, however, the withering away of the state, both in Britain and the Papua New Guinea Highlands, has an impact on societies in need of health services, education, welfare, and the police. Discipline, governmentality, and even colonialism perhaps entailed gain as well as loss; certainly the shift from citizenship to shopping entails loss as well as gain.

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