Also by Ellie Vasta

AUSTRALIA'S ITALIANS (*co-editor with Stephen Castles, Caroline Alcorso and Gaetano Rando*)

THE TEETH ARE SMILING: The Persistence of Racism in Multicultural Australia (*co-editor with Stephen Castles*)

Citizenship, Community and Democracy

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Preface

Within western democracies, the notion of citizenship is currently under scrutiny both in terms of its theoretical significance as well as its practical application. Historically, citizenship is tied to the idea of clearly delimited and relatively autonomous nation-states. Today this model is under pressure from without and within: from without by the globalizing forces of economic integration, supranational governance and transnational media; from within, by the burgeoning of diverse communities and social and political identities. National governments are losing their capacity to protect their citizens from threatening changes. This leads to scepticism about the value of parliamentary democracy as a model for managing diverse populations in a time of rapid global change. People seek alternative ways of expressing their rights and aspirations as citizens. The focus shifts away from the national levels to new sub- and supra-national arenas: how can democracy be achieved in and for communties; how can countervailing power to the might of the multinationals be built at the transnational level?

With the end of the Cold War, victory was proclaimed for democracy. Yet new contradictions proliferate. The citizens of western democracies have become more and more disaffected with official politics. National politicians, with their obsession for short-term electoral point-scoring, seem increasingly out of touch. None can offer credible alternatives to the transnational corporate agendas of deregulation and economic restructuring, which seem to be eroding the fabric of society. Despite the economic growth and technological advances of the past half century, people feel increasingly insecure. The apparent victory of democracy is matched by a growing sense of powerlessness. People are left with few alternatives. They may become politically apathetic or turn to Right-wing populist movements such as Le Pen and the *Front National* in France, Haider's Freedom party in Austria or Pauline Hanson's *One Nation Party* in Australia. Others seek salvation in new religious movements or in identity politics. Yet others turn to their local communities where they feel they can bring about some change.

As multiethnic societies emerge virtually everywhere in response to mass migration, these issues become all the more significant. Contradictory effects of globalization, such as the simultaneous trends towards fragmentation and homogenization, exacerbate the problem. The notion of difference – in the sense of a recognition of the heterogeneity of virtually all populations and communities – becomes a rallying point in the analysis of citizenship, community and democracy.

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Democracy and Governance in the South Pacific

Vijay Naidu

Introduction

The South Pacific region is characterized by such an extent of diversity that scholars have hesitated to make generalizations about it. However, there are certain similarities of indigenous social structures and cultures as well as of colonial and post-colonial experiences and patterns of development, which allow for meaningful comparative analysis. This chapter will briefly describe pre-colonial societies and communities and the transformation brought about by colonialism, followed by a more extensive examination of post-colonial trends which have impacted on the nature of communities and citizenship. It is argued that the processes of development in the region did not foster democracy and that the communities that exist tend to be based on social inequalities antithetical to notions of citizenship and democracy.

Although the region is rather large in terms of size, most of it being the gigantic Pacific Ocean, it is very small in terms of land area and total population. The geographer Cumberland wrote of the tiny scattered islands 'lost over its blue expanse like handfuls of confetti floating on a lake' (1962: 5). Some six million people inhabit the 20 different territories that comprise the 2 per cent of land area in this 30 million square kilometres of sea. However, even generalizations about size of island countries need to be qualified as, on the one hand, there is the huge island of New Guinea with West Papua or West Irian on the west comprising 410 660 square kilometres and 1 734 000 inhabitants, and the state of Papua New Guinea in the east which has an area of 461 600 square kilometres and a population of nearly four million people. On the other hand, there is tiny Nauru in the Central South Pacific covering

only 22 square kilometres and inhabited by 9919 people (Douglas and Douglas 1994: 2–4).

The island territories also vary in their political statuses with a handful still under colonial rule, a few others linked politically to former metropolitan rulers and still others that are politically independent (see Table 3.1).

Pre-contact polities

Pre-European Pacific societies and polities were relatively small compared to the nation-states in the area today: '[b]eing perhaps twenty five in Aboriginal Australia, several hundred in Melanesia and Micronesia, and several thousand in the large islands of Polynesia' (Crocombe 1971: 22). In both Aboriginal Australia and the Melanesian islands of the Western Pacific, larger groupings of several hundred or a few thousand were known during times of harvest and in supra-local trading partnerships. The thousands of societies exhibited a considerable amount of diversity in terms of languages, customs and social organization. This was particularly the case in the Melanesian islands of New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia (Kanaky), Vanuatu and Fiji. Papua New Guinea has more than a thousand languages and cultural groups; Vanuatu has 112, the Solomons 88 and Fiji around six.

The Polynesian cultural area divided into two regions – the western and eastern – was marked by considerable homogeneity. There were differences in dialect as well as some organizational aspects but, by comparison, the peoples of Tonga, Hawaii, Cook Islands, Aotearoa New Zealand, Society Islands, Tahiti and Tuvalu were less diverse. The Micronesian islands of Marianas, Carolines, Guam, Marshalls, Palau and Kiribati exhibited greater variety within their territories as well as between each other.

Generally, two immediately observable forms of society and polity characterized the pre-capitalist Pacific. Micronesia, and especially Polynesia, were characterized by chiefdoms which ranked individuals and groups into a hierarchy of lineages, with the politically dominant lineage at the apex of the social order. In Melanesia, on the other hand, there were generally smaller polities which were relatively egalitarian, atomistic, segmented and autonomous, reminiscent of what have been called acephalous societies in Africa (Valentine 1970: 337).

A common feature in all Pacific Island societies was the fundamental importance of kinship relations as the most important, and in some instances the only, organizational principle. Kinship governed one's social status, access to land, wealth and political status. Membership

Table 3.1
Political Status, Land Area and Population of Pacific Island States

Country	Status	Land area (sq. km)	Population
American Samoa	Unincorporated US Territory	197	50 923
Cook Islands	Self-governing in free association with New Zealand	240	17 400
Easter Island	Province of Chile	180	2770
Fed. States of Micronesia	Self-governing in free association with the US	702	100 520
Fiji	Independent Republic	18 376	746 326
French Polynesia	Overseas Territory of France	3521	201 400
Guam	Unincorporated US Territory	5491	133 152
Hawai'i	State of the US	16 641	1 159 600
Irian Jaya	Indonesian Province	410 660	1 734 000
Kiribati	Independent Republic	726	72 298
Marshall Islands	Self-governing republic in free association with US	720	49 969
Nauru	Independent republic	21.2	9919
New Caledonia	Overseas territory of France	19 103	173 300
New Zealand	Independent State	270 500	3 434 900
Niue	Self-governing in free association with New Zealand	258	2532
Norfolk Island	Australian territory	34.5	1912
North'n Mariana Islands	Commonwealth of the US	475	43 345
Palau (Belau)	Self-governing republic in free association with the US	500	16 386
Papua New Guinea	Independent State	461 690	3 963 000
Pitcairn Islands	Dependency of Britain	4.5	65
Solomon Islands	Independent State	29 785	350 553
Tokelau	Dependency of New Zealand	12.1	1577
Tonga	Independent Monarchy	697.71	94,649
Torres Strait Islands	Australian possession	673	8500
Tuvalu	Independent State	25.9	9045
Vanuatu	Independent Republic	12 189	150 864
Wallis and Futuna	Overseas Territory of France	124	13 900
Western Samoa	Independent State	2934	159 004

Source: Adapted from Douglas, N. and N. Douglas (eds) (1994), *Pacific Islands Yearbook*, 17th edition, pp. 2–5.

of a kinship group (the extended family, the subclan or lineage and clan) could be either matrilineal (as in the case of much of Micronesia and Melanesia) or patrilineal (as in some Melanesian and Micronesian, and all Polynesian societies), but throughout the Pacific the system was flexible and usually, in practice, ambilateral. Certain lineages were given responsibility for specific duties. In eastern Fiji, for instance, lineages specialized in chiefly functions, as warriors, as heralds, carpenters, fishermen and priests (Roth 1973). In Samoa, guild-like organizations of master craftsmen were established along lineage lines.

Control over the lineage group was in the hands of the most senior male member (defined by descent, age and ability). Beyond a particular lineage or subclan, authority for village-wide coordination of activities came to be vested in the lineage that controlled most land. Conquest, magical powers and control over rituals contributed to influence and control of land. In some Polynesian societies, the aristocratic lineage was imbued with such spiritual powers that the well-being of the people depended on serving their wishes. Direct control of the land in such situations was replaced by an ideology of service to the high born and fear of supernatural sanctions.

In Melanesia, the larger land-owning groups exerted socio-political influence over other lineages in the area. Power and prestige were linked to the building of men's club houses and the giving of feasts for which large numbers of pigs were slaughtered. These status-acquiring activities were the domain of individual males from groups with larger land ownership. Polygynous marriages ensured access to the labour of wives and affines. The potlatch competition and ostentatious consumption of wealth for status acquisition limited its accumulation.

In some parts of Melanesia, and in Micronesia and Polynesia, hereditary titles attached to particular lineages and their land emerged. In some societies, the control over all land in a locality – a village, a district, in an island or even groups of islands – came under the dominant lineage. This lineage provided hereditary chiefs who, in Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii, Tahiti and eastern parts of Fiji, became so powerful that their ancestors were deified.

In the larger polities of the eastern Pacific, 'local stalwarts, supervisors of irrigation works, priests, warriors, craftsmen, messengers and diplomats formed a "primitive bureaucracy"' (Sahlins 1958: 16) which supervised productive activities and helped in their appropriation. 'The distinction between producers and distributors corresponds precisely to that between non-chiefs and chiefs' (Sahlins 1958: 5).

A form of class society had been established with a great difference in the position of the various ranks:

> The different classes of society may be divided roughly into what writers call chiefs, middle classes and common people. I do not treat the priesthood as a class, as they appear to have belonged to all classes, though many of the more important priests were related to the upper classes; I do not mention the slaves as they, to whatever class or classes of society they have belonged, were I think, as a rule, Polynesian prisoners of war... (Williamson 1924, cited in Valentine 1970: 339).

According to Sahlins, contradictions emerged in both the big man and chieftainship systems. The big man was able to expand production and activate higher level exchanges. He became a centre-point for the merging of the fragmented units that characterized many parts of the western Pacific.

Surplus extraction in these social formations was made through the principle of gerontocracy in the sense that the elders – and amongst them the emergent big man – controlled access to elite goods, women, and social knowledge necessary for status mobility. For young men to marry it was essential to obtain bride money, that is, the valuable goods controlled by the elders. They were compelled to work for the elders and get into debt (within the kinship framework) before being able to marry.

To maintain himself at a supra-local level, the big man needed to take more and more from his fellows for less and less in return. This resulted in a decline in support for him and in some cases he even met a violent death. 'Began in reciprocity, his control ends in extraction. Undermined from within and challenged from outside, his power collapses leading to the "big-man's" fall in favour of some rival' (Godelier 1977: 111).

The contradiction in the rank societies of Polynesia, similarly occurred when the chiefs appropriated too much. This happened in a cyclical fashion. Expansion occurred as a consequence of surplus siphoned off from the commoners and as tributes from adjacent groups. This was accompanied by the growth of a 'primitive bureaucracy' which led to an even greater imbalance of the flow of wealth in favour of the apparatus. The structural limits were reached in this way, accompanied by rebellion and partition:

> ... with the realm now stretched over distant and lately subdued hinterlands, the bureaucratic costs of rule apparently rose higher than the increases in revenue, so that the victorious chief merely succeeded in adding enemies abroad to a worse unrest at home. The cycles of centralization and exaction are now at their zenith (Sahlins 1972: 145).

Kinship defined the primitive condition of both the small atomistic communities of the western Pacific and the extensively centralized polities of the eastern Pacific. While one exhibited the more coercive forms of surplus appropriation and more sophisticated institutional forms, thereby enlarging the size of the political unit, it was unable to break away for long from the 'primitive bond between the ruler and the ruled' which are marked by the ethics of reciprocity and generosity.[1]

The impression given by Sahlins and others of an egalitarian base from which aspiring candidates emerge to vie for the Big Manship in Melanesia is unfounded.

> Normally there was no hereditary political authorities, not even hereditary ranks and statuses. ... It was largely open to any man to advance himself socially by his own endeavours ... political and legal security depended upon support by relatives and kin, and the impermanent authority of the big men (Worsley 1957: 15–16).

Much depended on his personal qualities, but an element of inheritance was important.[2] Even in the New Guinea Highlands where every man was supposed to start from scratch, it was an advantage to be the son of a big man (Barnes 1966: 125). Among the Siuai, Oliver (1962) observed that most men were efficient farmers and 'ambitious traders and capitalists [sic]' but that to be *mumi* (big man) it was useful to have had a father who was *mumi*. The prestige and remaining wealth after the mortuary distribution upon his death provided a headstart over the others.

Such a critical advantage prompts many to say that 'only the son of a mumi can become a mumi' (Oliver (1962: 59; see also Scheffler 1971: 274–5). Similarly, in some societies, like the Molima of the D'Entrecateaux and the Kove of New Britain, 'anyone who is not closely related to a former big man is publicly condemned and shamed by the community for trying to achieve such a position, and may find it virtually impossible to do so' (Chowning 1977: 45). Therefore, 'it is not true that everywhere in Melanesia any man had an equal opportunity to achieve high status' (Chowning 1977: 45).[3]

Colonial transformation

While proto-states emerged in parts of Polynesia before the incursion of Europeans, it was during the first 50 years of contact with them that further experiments in state formation took place. However, it was not until direct colonialism in most parts of the Pacific that statehood was secured. With the establishment of the colonial state, citizenship began to be defined differently from both pre-contact and early contact periods.

Whereas, previous to the arrival of explorers, whalers, missionaries and traders, communities were localized and defined entirely by kinship ties, the creation and promotion of the colonial economy and polity generated the movement of people beyond their formerly localized settlements. Initially, outsiders were adopted as kinsmen (as returned ancestors or affines) or became the 'belongings' of powerful chiefs. With the establishment of consular offices by imperial powers, jurisdiction over foreigners was based on their citizenship. Often these consulars, with the help of visiting gunboats from their countries of origin exerted considerable influence over local authorities (Koskinen 1953: 167). Thus, more often than not, early governments formed by Pacific Islanders and settlers were able to exercise dominion over 'natives' and their ability to control and tax white settlers was tenuous.

Colonialism required the mobility of labour as plantations, mines and logging operations together with the exploitation of other resources were initiated. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was a massive increase in population mobility as young men and women were relocated to other parts of their countries or to other labour-importing countries. Labour was also imported from Europe and Asia into the region. Chinese, Filipinos, Portuguese and Japanese were recruited as plantation labourers in Hawaii. The Chinese worked in the plantations of Samoa and Tahiti and in the phosphate mines in Nauru. Vietnamese and other Indo-Chinese worked in the nickel mines of New Caledonia. Indian indentured labourers were recruited to work in Fiji plantations.

For localities in the islands sending labourers in several instances, the pre-existing communities' survival was put to risk. Without the vital labour of able-bodied young adults to produce food crops, build and maintain houses, hunt and fish and generally participate in community activities, a period of social disintegration ensued (Graves 1984). On the other hand, communities in receiving areas were confronted with the intrusion of large numbers of unrelated strangers who were potential enemies. Plantations and mines were total institutions which, in confining their labourers within their boundaries, limited their interaction with neighbouring communities. This helped to a certain extent in avoiding contact and conflict. In many cases, however, conflicts between residents of the labour-receiving area and the immigrants did take place. Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination emerged between the two categories as in-group/out-group sentiments evolved. Sometimes these were actively encouraged by the management of plantations and mines to keep the labourers separated from the locals.

In Fiji, indentured Indian labourers lived in the barrack-like lines in the plantations, secluded very much like the Melanesian labourers

before them from ethnic Fijians. Strict regulations enforced by the state forbade Indians from residing in ethnic Fijian villages and the locals were instructed not to harbour any labourers who may have escaped from a neighbouring plantation. With the end of the Indentured Labour System in 1920, the British colonial government continued its policy of segregated residence for the former 'coolies'. Under the circumstances, the sense of community that emerged tended to be based on ethnicity. The ethnic division of labour in the economy and separate ethnically weighted representation in the political domain reinforced this. Segregated schooling was not only condoned but actively encouraged (Naidu 1977).

At the political level, the colonial state centralized and concentrated power that had been diffused among local communities of varying political strength. It established an administrative order in which the dictates of the imperial 'mother' country and her local agent, the governor had to be implemented without question. The racial hierarchy in society with its differential rights and duties was replicated and reinforced in the state structure itself. While local communities continued to manage their affairs and be organized according to customary rules, systems of indirect rule incorporated and instrumentalized local authority structures for colonial ends. There was no room for participatory politics or the 'empowerment of people'. Political activities were discouraged. The word 'democracy' was evidently not in the lexicon of the colonial rulers.

However, the social and economic changes began before direct colonialism and continued during the several decades of colonial administration, irreversibly transforming Pacific island societies and creating new categories of people and organizations. These transformations in turn eventually led to changes in the structures of power and domination and ultimately to the end of colonial rule in most countries. Besides the demographic and cultural changes brought about by the presence of Asian and European immigrants and their descendants, in the urban areas and capitalist enclaves a class of worker dependant on wage labour emerged. Mission and community schools resulted in a western-educated category of people who filled lower and, progressively, the middle and even higher ranks of the colonial bureaucracy. Clerks, interpreters, pastors, policemen, teachers, nurses, medical officers, native magistrates, and the occasional lawyer emerged. Rural dwellers were transformed from tribal societies to peasant communities, politically administered by the centralized colonial state and economically tied to the international market via the imperial country's national market as producers of raw materials and importers of finished products and fuel.

Disagreements over taxation, commodity and food prices, wages and salaries and other terms and conditions of employment (including corporal punishment and penal sanctions), rights and duties of different categories of people, political representation and generally the treatment of the colonized by the colonizer led to organized challenges to colonial rule in virtually all Pacific colonies. Such protests were heavily natavistic in the period up to the First World War, they took the form of cooperatives and companies organized and controlled by islanders themselves in the period up to the Second World War and direct challenges to colonial rule from the late 1940s. Maasina Ruru in the Solomons, the Mau in Samoa, John Frum movement in New Hebrides and the Viti Kambani in Fiji were examples of these different types of anti-colonial protests. Conflicts between black labour and white managers/owners became perennial in the plantations, mines, agency houses and mills. These industrial conflicts with their racial overtones and protest movements were suppressed forcefully; their leaders were isolated and punished severely. Such repressive measures only contributed to a temporary respite as the inherent contradictions of colonial economy, society and polity gave rise to new conflicts.

For the region as a whole, it can be said that colonial rule did not prepare islanders for democratic systems of government. Representation of the broad masses of people and the strengthening of the legislature occurred in most countries within a decade of their political independence. Election by voters of representatives to the legislative councils was largely unknown and, if practised, was limited by racial, income, property and educational qualifications. In Fiji, universal franchise was only introduced in 1963 in a highly discriminatory system of ethnic representation. Elsewhere, universal suffrage was not introduced until the eve of political independence. Yash Ghai's observation that for most island countries the participation by the people in the political process as a whole took place for the first time and in its most intense form at the time of formulating the independence constitution is valid for all countries with the exception of Fiji and the Cook Islands. In the latter countries, representatives and leaders of the people made the decisions about their respective constitutions, heavily influenced by the representatives of the colonial power (Ghai 1988).

Post-colonial patterns

Political independence in the South Pacific began with Western Samoa's independence from New Zealand in 1962 and continued during the 1970s and 1980s for other countries as a result of pressures from

within as well as from without, particularly by the United Nations Committee on Decolonization. Anti-colonial struggles continue in New Caledonia (Kanaky), West Papua and Tahiti. Although the newly independent countries adopted many of the institutions (adapted to local condition) of liberal democratic states – borrowing liberally especially from the West Minister system via Whitehall and to a much lesser extent the American Presidential system – neither the traditional social order nor colonial rule has produced the cultural requisites to nurture democratic institutions. Indeed, it has been argued that where early forms of diffused power and relative equality existed, a combination of more authoritarian systems of colonial and traditional rule were introduced by the colonial administration (Durutalo 1985). The uneasy relationship between the transplanted institutions of liberal democracies and those that characterized the indigenous socio-political order has been well captured by the Alai'lima (1994: 250), who, in writing about the Samoan case, aptly remarked that:

> [t]he only difficulty was centuries of experience building family networks, satisfying collective dignity inclinations, maneuvering proud families into consensus, and administering villages – had not equipped them to pass and enforcing national laws; administering island – wide health, education, and public works systems; and protect individual rights. ... A constitutional convention was held in 1960 and by 1962 Western Samoa was independent again – this time equipped with a written constitution, parliament, head of state, prime minister, cabinet, public service and magistrate courts.

Independent island countries have had free and fair elections, bills of rights securing individual rights and various freedoms, changes in ruling political parties and/or factions/coalitions, governing and opposition sides in the legislature, checks and balances such as an independent judiciary, constitutionally established commissions and in some cases an ombudsman's office. In Tonga, which was never colonized, the nomination of the members of Cabinet by the king, his almost absolute power and the equal representation in the parliament of 33 nobles and 90 000 commoners by nine representatives each, qualify the nature and extent of democratic rule. In Samoa, until recently, only *matais* or chiefs could be candidates and vote in national elections, but since 1991 all adults over the age of 21 are eligible to vote, but only *matais* can be parliamentarians. Fiji's 1970 constitution provided representation weighted in favour of ethnic Fijians and general voters, and entrenched a separate system of local government exclusively for the former. Throughout the region, there is recognition and in many

cases the entrenchment in national constitutions of customary laws, the traditional hierarchy of chiefs as well as customary ownership of land and its inalienability. Councils of chiefs are to be found in the Cook Islands, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Belau, Vanuatu and in Samoa where the national *Fono* comprises of chiefs.

The constitutional framework for political actions and processes from the outset established political systems that appear to have the facade or paraphernalia of democracy, albeit in modified forms to suit local conditions. At both the national and local levels, there exist status inequalities with differential rights and obligations. Nominal equality before the law is circumscribed by the customary status order. Pacific island political cultures do not as a rule encourage dissent and the modes of dispute settlement ensure that the established order is not disturbed. The smallness of societies and the customs of respect also limit the extent of political conflict. Fundamental disagreements over political ideology are non-existent in most island countries. This has contributed to the relative weakness of political parties in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Tuvalu, Tonga and Samoa. Conformity and consensus – the much romanticized 'Pacific Way' – is advocated by those in authority.

Disagreements and open rifts between politicians and their respective groups of followers have occurred in several countries. These tend to be based on personality clashes, personal ambitions and styles of leadership rather than on differences over substantive political issues. The social rank of individuals and customs of respect tend to be less important in Melanesia. In Polynesian countries without overarching paramount chiefs, competition between political leaders takes the form of factions built around district or sub-district centres of power.

If democracy is defined as the right of the people of a country to chose their representatives in free and fair elections so that they can periodically review the performance of a government and, if need be, to change it, a majority of the island states have been democratic. Ruling political parties have been replaced by opposition parties and politicians through the ballot box as well as by the means of a vote of non-confidence. Fluid coalitions after general elections have resulted in several changes of government in Papua New Guinea, the Solomons and Vanuatu. In these countries, there has also been more than 40 per cent turnover in members of parliament in each national election and the casualties have included an almost equal proportion of cabinet ministers. The transfer of power from one political party or coalition of parties to another has been orderly, although the process of forming coalitions is usually tough and unpredictable in almost all the

independent states (Busch et al. 1994).

The exception to a smooth transfer of power upon the defeat of a ruling party at a general election is provided by Fiji which has been characterized by relatively stronger political party organizations. On two occasions in its nearly three decades of independence, Fiji failed the acid test of transition from one government to another when the ruling political party was defeated. The Alliance Party was defeated in the April general election of 1977; with the offer of a government of national unity rejected by the leader of the Alliance, the National Federation Party (NFP) proceeded to form the government. This turn of events was brought to a halt when the then Governor General decided in his 'own deliberate judgement' that the Alliance Party leader and former Prime Minister enjoyed a majority of support in parliament. A subsequent vote of confidence in the government of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara failed. This led to the second election of that year, which the Alliance easily won because of the factional split in the NFP, partly brought about by the Governor General's action.

On the second occasion, in April 1987, the transition of government from the defeated Alliance Party to the Fiji Labour Party and National Federation Party Coalition occurred but the Coalition government led by Dr Timoci Uluvuda Bavadra was overthrown, a month after taking office, by the Fiji military. Former Alliance Party ministers, including the defeated Prime Minister, were returned to power shared with military officers and members of the so-called *Taukei* (indigenous owners) movement. The second military coup of 1987, directed at the Deuba Accord negotiated between the leaders of the Alliance and Coalition parties with the support of the then Governor General (himself a former Alliance stalwart and Deputy Prime Minister), led to the abrogation of the 1970 Constitution and the declaration of the Republic.[4] Fiji's failure to secure the transfer of political power a second time around was explained in ethnic terms. This brings us to the wider discussion of community and democracy in the South Pacific.

Community and democracy

Ethnicity and geographical origins have been and continue to be very significant bases for community building and in-group formation throughout the South Pacific region. Europeans, Asians, mixed race people (themselves differentiated internally) have been perceived as out-groups by indigenes. Further differentiation among islanders has been on the basis of their spatial origins. Those in the vicinity of the urban centre, the sugar mill, the copper or gold mine, the fish cannery, the timber mill or from the 'main island' perceive themselves as having precedence over the 'immigrants'. Not unusually, they own the land on

which the latter have settled, largely as tenants, at will but using traditional approaches to acquire residential allotments. In some instances, as in Vila and South Tarawa, the local landowning groups restrict and even forbid 'immigrants' from using land for cultivation and taking seafood from customary-owned fishing grounds. On a wider national basis in Fiji, customary owners of fishing grounds have attacked other ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians found fishing in their areas. Throughout the island South Pacific, resources such as land, reefs and lagoons as well as forests and minerals are held in common by local indigenous groups which tend to limit access to their resources to 'outsiders'. Such access may be gained through lease arrangements, royalty payments, and traditional exchanges. However, local groups may refuse access altogether or because of internal differences amongst members may act in ways that impede the use of these resources.

In its extreme form, a combination of ethnicity and resource-use consideration can lead to bitter confrontation and conflict. A number of secessionist movements in the region have their origins in these factors. The separatist movement in Western Solomons in the 1970s, the confrontation between western landowners and the government of Fiji in the early 1980s, the secessionist movements in Santo in Vanuatu and in Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, just before independence of these countries, are explainable in these terms. The Bougainville independence movement and civil war has continued for more than a decade, with severe consequences both to the people of Bougainville and to the country.

This conflict is reminiscent of civil wars in resource-rich countries of Africa where colonial rulers drew boundaries that partitioned the continent with no regard to the existing spread of local ethnic groups and nations. The leaders of the Bougainville independence movement have stressed that they are culturally distinct from the rest of Papua New Guinea, having close affinities with the communities of western province of the Solomon Islands. They have disputed the distribution of the wealth extracted from the largest open cast mine in the Southern Hemisphere. They have resented the presence of outsiders, including Papua New Guineans from other parts of the country. These 'strangers' were not welcomed. Bougainvilleans have also vigorously remonstrated against the environmental damage caused by the mine (Kabutaulaka 1994). Their sense of community, defined by their ethnicity, was challenged by the citizenship rights of all Papua New Guineans to be able to move freely in their country and to enjoy the benefits of the country's resources as a people, irrespective of where the particular resource might be physically located (Ivarature 1997).

Ethnic conflict was the most widely accepted explanation for the

military coups in Fiji. In an earlier paper, I argued that the real explanation was to be found in the denial of citizenship rights to one half of the population of Fiji (Naidu 1989). The Coalition of the National Federation Party and the Fiji Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Dr Timoci Uluivuda Bavadra (an ethnic Fijian medical doctor and former civil servant), received the support of a large number of Indo-Fijian voters which, coupled with a small swing in ethnic Fijian and General Elector votes, defeated the Alliance Party. This party had ruled Fiji since independence. It was the refusal of its members to accept the verdict of the polls that led to the extra-legal military intervention. Subsequently, the *Taukei* Movement (led by former Alliance Ministers and MPs) and the military maintained that the overthrow of the Bavadra government was necessitated by their desire to protect 'the paramountcy' of ethnic Fijian interests and rights, and because ethnic Fijians did not want an 'Indian-dominated government' (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988).

This explanation was uncritically repeated, with a few notable exceptions, throughout the world by the Australasian media.[5] The fact that the military government and the so-called Interim Government, which followed it, comprised predominantly former Alliance politicians did not receive much comment. The Interim Government was led by the defeated Alliance Party Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who is now President of the Republic of Fiji. It is apparent from this episode in Fiji's political history that race or ethnicity was accepted as a legitimate basis for extra-legal action to deny the wishes of the majority of the electorate as expressed in the last free and fair election.

Asesela Ravuvu in his book *Facade of Democracy* (1991) maintained that ethnic Fijian fears of being politically dominated by Indo-Fijians motivated the coups and that 'Democracy was an illusion, a facade, a parting whim of a colonial power that had itself practised dictatorship' (Ravuvu 1991: 87). The notion that the institutions of the Westminster model, however modified, remained relatively superficial trappings superimposed on indigenous cultures as 'paraphernalia of democracy' is not new and may be applied to all Pacific Island countries. Ravuvu also dwelt at length on the concepts of *Taukei* and *Vulagi* to differentiate between indigenous Fijians and other citizens of Fiji, particularly Indo-Fijians. The rights and obligations of the *Taukei* (the owners of the land and the people of the land) and the *Vulagi* (the visitors or foreigners) remain distinct and complementary. This distinction applied among ethnic Fijians themselves, that is, the original inhabitants in an area as against newcomers.

> Through the goodwill of the *taukei*, however, subsequent arrivals can be accommodated and assigned house and garden sites. They are only allowed the right to use those designated areas but not the rights of ownership, which only belong to the *taukei* or their descendants.
>
> The *taukei* are normally at the forefront of the discussion in decision-making. The vulagi are allowed to participate in the process but they must not be seen [to be] domineering or forceful. Usually, when a vulagi behaves in this way, he is then reminded of his position as vulagi by the *taukei*, who quite often points the way out for them to disappear.
>
> Traditional protocol requires the vulagi to be humble ... the vulagi are generally the work horses of the physical and social settings in which they are established ... it is prudent, however, not to boast or publicly claim honour for their contribution in support of the *taukei* cause ... it is for the *taukei* to give recognition to vulagi for the contribution and co-operation rendered.... if the vulagi continue to be boastful, arrogant, and to demean the *taukei* for their ineffectiveness ... they will show the vulagi the direction to get out fast ...
>
> The best analogy to this *taukei* and vulagi relationship is that of host and guest. The host is the *taukei* and the guest is the vulagi ... the host is generally in command, and the guest must comply with the host's requirements if he is to be accepted and accommodated. If the guest does not comply with the host's expectations then he may very well leave before he is thrown out of the house (Ravuvu 1991: 60).

In this view, the third or fourth generation Indo-Fijian citizen of Fiji must not and cannot upset the relationship of power in society which since independence favours the eastern chiefly establishment. Dalton insightfully observed 17 years before the military coups that there existed, 'a system of interlocking family connections in the top echelons of the government, the public service, and the Army [which] guarantees *Ratu* (chiefly) dominance and protects it against challenges from dissident Fijians or from the Indian community' (1970: 8). This state of affairs is seen by another scholar as internal colonialism over the western, resource-rich parts of the largest island. The dominance of the eastern chiefly elite was made possible during British colonial rule and has continued with the assistance of western collaborator chiefs (Durutalo 1985). Ravuvu's use of the *taukei* and *vulagi* framework also means that, like ethnic Fijians who are later arrivals in a previously settled locality, Indo-Fijians would remain *vulagis*. Their rights would be determined by and remain secondary to the rights of the ethnic Fijians in the future.

Perspectives such as Ravuvu's are widespread in the South Pacific, especially among the inhabitants of areas which have attracted immigrants from elsewhere. Economic enclaves such as plantations, mines, tourist resorts, timber mills and even whole towns might be affected as a result of owners of the land asserting the primacy of their rights over those of immigrants and newcomers. In the Fiji case, when extended to the national level, it provided the justification for the military coups and the racist 1990 Constitution imposed by Presidential decree.

Parochial identities of ethnicity, tribe, religion and position in an established 'traditional hierarchy' which are integral to existing exclusive communities affect national political processes in several other ways. In Fiji and New Caledonia (Kanaky), ethnicity has and continues to dominate national political discourse. While in the latter the colonial order is the single major contributing factor to this state of affairs, in Fiji ethnicity has been a useful instrument for the management of society. Growing economic and social disparities within each of the ethnic categories have been shunted aside by reference to disparities between these ethnic categories and by appeals for unity by leaders of each of these categories in defence of their ethnic interests or against other ethnic categories. The 'us' and 'them' outlook is fostered in this way (Robertson and Tamanisau 1988; Sutherland 1992).

In the South Pacific, at the national level, politicians and bureaucrats of particular ethnic, tribal or social-status background have been responsible for fraud, embezzlement and abuse of office. Individuals have accumulated great personal wealth and have diverted national resources to their own communities. In much of Melanesia, natural resources, especially forests, have been exploited in a totally unsustainable way to the point of complete depletion as the result of less than transparent dealings by politicians, local community leaders and unscrupulous entrepreneurs (from Malaysia and Indonesia). Former clerks, teachers, pastors, local chiefs, lawyers, small businessmen, military offices and civil servants have amassed fortunes as politicians. Parliamentarians in Fiji, the Solomons and Papua New Guinea have adopted for themselves special pension schemes or additional benefits within existing pension systems.

There have been national scandals over the misuse of public funds and outright corruption in Palau (where a President was shot dead for opposing graft), Cook Islands and the Marshalls. Letters of credit were obtained by foreign nationals, who promised large sums of money to national politicians in the Cook Islands and Vanuatu. These were not cleared through the normal channels by the senior politicians concerned. In Fiji, the National Bank of Fiji lost in excess of $220 million because very prominent persons, including several politicians, borrowed

large sums of money that were unsecured. Their personal contacts and relationships with Bank management allowed them to do this. Corrupt practices have been uncovered in several government departments and statutory bodies.

Massive siphoning of funds by leading politicians and their friends and relatives led to the deep crisis in the Vanuatu National Provident Fund. When ordinary contributors sought to withdraw funds, they were told that the VNPF did not have the money. This led to riots and civil unrest. The misuse of aid funds, the abuse of overseas travel, the dishonesty surrounding the sale of passports in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji, and other immigration scams have involved senior bureaucrats, politicians and businessmen. Some of the individuals involved are well-known local personalities, yet there has been extremely few cases of resignation from public office or effective prosecution.

Worse still, politicians who have gained notoriety for being corrupt and who have abused public office have been re-elected by their constituencies, sometimes again and again. An especially ludicrous example of this was the re-election of the former Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea by his electorate, even though his dealings with and payment of nearly 40 million kina to Sandline, the British mercenary firm, to squash the Bougainville secessionist movement was a national scandal which led to the downfall of Sir Julius Chan as Prime Minister (Ivarature 1997). This is because the local electorates, primarily of the same ethnic group, religion and even congregation, and comprising a kinship network or owing allegiance to a big man or chief, continue to regard them as the most appropriate representatives on the basis of being able to 'deliver the goods' – in many cases literally, in the form of roads, water supply, scholarships, employment, facilitating deals as well as hard cash.

Until recently, in Samoa, the proliferation of *matai* titles accompanied by feasting and generous gift-giving were crucial aspects of electioneering for seats in the national parliament. Kinship networks and other family connections constitute the primary avenue to political success. Critical national issues have been secondary. Once in power, the politician must ensure that these relatives and associates are given special consideration by the state whenever the need arises. In 1996 the Auditor General of Samoa was sacked by the government for exposing the misuse of public funds. A system of patronage extending from top government officials to the peasants in the villages has existed in Fiji in the form of the system of Fijian administration 'a state within a state'. Annual government subventions to provincial councils and local government officials have generally been used in less-than-transparent ways (Qalo 1984). Nepotism and cronyism have been integral features of

employment in the public service as well as private corporations, not only in Fiji but also throughout the region. Recently, Qalo, in reviewing a Fiji Public Service Commission booklet entitled, *Making a Difference: Civil Service Reforms* (1997), remarked that 'the names and relationship of those employees in the civil service are conspicuously connected' (Qalo,1998: 7).

Disjunction between community and good governance

Throughout the South Pacific region, local communities in the villages and districts struggle to survive in the face of the changes that are transforming them. The sense of community is largely centred around local groups and kinship networks. Relatives who have migrated to urban centres or even overseas remain part of these networks. These by their nature are exclusive. When community sentiments are extended beyond localities, they encapsulate those living on an island, the language group, those of a particular religion, the tribe or the ethnic group. It is very rare for a sense of community to pervade across these dimensions and the sense of nationhood is still in embryonic form. National sentiments arise when there is a national event, such as independence day celebrations in the smallest of the island countries. In Tonga, the king provides the symbol of unity for Tongans. In-group/out-group feelings and a sense of having things in common are heightened when national teams play against overseas sides. As a rule, however, the relatively more intense relationships, mutual support, sense of belonging and identity characteristic of a community occur at the local level. In much of Melanesia, such parochial ties of 'wantoks' continue to be more important than any nascent national identity. In Fiji, ethnicity has in the recent past superseded a national sense of belonging. The persistence of these older and parochial bases of the exclusive community does not encourage the development of the type of community that enhances national social capital; it is likely to endanger it (Cox 1995).

At the local levels of the village, the district or province, communities in island countries do not practise democracy. As in the colonial period, village and district councils operate 'with various degrees of interference from central government' (Powles 1980: 409). Generally, status and power are assigned on the basis of kinship, age and gender. Even at the level of the so-called 'grass roots', there are families with relatively more resources at their disposal and who have connections with the politically powerful. Families of local chiefs or big men, pastors and traders fall into this category.

Younger persons (defined relative to the age of others) act on

community decisions made by older persons. They do not have the right to speak at village meetings unless summoned to do so. The pressure put on younger adults by their elders to conform to the cultural norms as the latter interpret them has resulted in many problems in local communities. These have included anti-social activities such as substance abuse, violence, and suicides. Many young people chose to migrate to urban areas rather than follow the rigid norms of their villages.

Women do not have a role in community deliberations. Their contribution comes in the form of provisioning the elders with food and beverages as the latter discuss community issues. In this role of caterers, the women are assisted by the young men. In Polynesia and Micronesia, where women do enjoy a higher status than in Melanesia, community decision-making outside of exclusive women's groups are made by men of status. When women do participate in decision making, they do so because of their high rank determined by birth and/or marriage. Democratic decision making may occur at the level of the status category, for instance, among community elders in parts of Melanesia and Southern Kiribati; and within village or district *fonos* among *matai* in Samoa but not on the basis of the community as a whole.

Customs of respect and strict adherence to protocol associated with the public recognition of rank in society govern community-level decision making. Even where relative equality exists among men, as in many parts of Melanesia and among Indo-Fijians in Fiji, community norms require that mutual respect and cooperation be the basis of decision making. Consensual rather than adversarial approaches are encouraged. Obviously, to do otherwise would threatened the basis of the community and lead to feuds and other forms of outright conflict. In Samoa, the refusal to comply with the decision of local *matais* has led to a number of incidents of gross violations of human rights with the loss of property and life.

Cultural complexes that assign very considerable authority to individuals of status are neither conducive to democracy nor to good governance as both concepts are based on principles that contradict ascribed social inequality and seek public accountability. This contradiction has been a major reason for the withdrawal of the Fiji Council of Chiefs' support for the ruling Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni *Taukei* (SVT) Party. In order to continue to enjoy the respect of their people, chiefs have apparently realised that they must not as a status group back a political party and enter the hurly-burly of national politics. The nature of participatory and representative politics, periodic elections and the possibility of electoral defeat, public scrutiny in the use of tax-payers money, equality of voters and vying candidates, the ravages of

election campaigns, bureaucratic rules and procedures, checks and balances do not complement traditional forms of authority. They are inimical to such authority. It is evident that the monarchy and nobility in Tonga are strongly opposed to the pro-democracy movement because even the minimal demands for change in the political structures and processes are seen as the thin edge of the wedge that would totally undermine the traditional hierarchy of status and privileges. Those of rank in Tonga holding public office do not accept that they are accountable to the citizens; they owe allegiance to the king and to their relatives.

Towards a democratic cultural matrix

It has been argued this far that the cultural milieu in most South Pacific Island societies is not conducive to democracy. Although nearly all countries, with the exception of Fiji, have had free and fair elections followed by transition from one ruling party or coalition to another, the bases for voter mobilization have been kinship networks, ascribed status, place of origins, personalities, religion and ethnicity. To go beyond parochial ties, it is necessary to facilitate a number of changes that are already underway.

The processes of urbanization specifically and population mobility generally have resulted in people from different localities, different languages and cultural groups, and of different religious denominations living in proximity. It is not unusual that in many urban areas there has been a tendency for persons of the same background (place of origin, tribal groups, language and ethnicity) to congregate in the same locality. However, there is also the fact that people do work together, attend schools together and belong to churches and trade unions, irrespective of their background. Cross-cultural groups based on common interests have emerged in urban areas. The plurality of interests that are evolving on this basis would be facilitating democracy.

National integration has been an important goal for Pacific Island countries, particularly the Melanesian states with their great diversity of ethnic communities. Education is seen as the mechanism for the creation of national awareness and of the rights of citizenship. While this is perhaps the main approach, there is a need for caution regarding how much reliance there is on education alone. It is evident that in nearly all countries that have experienced political instability and internal conflict in the recent past, the mobilization of support based on parochial identities (particularly ethnicity) has been done by relatively well-educated persons. Colonial regimes and South Africa's apartheid system were manned by the most educated and sophisticated elements

of society. There are structural aspects of society, including issues of equity and access among citizens to economic, political and social benefits, that need to be addressed.

A major problem of democracy is media freedom. In most Pacific Island countries, there are restrictions on the media, both formal and informal, direct and indirect. Hitherto, governments have been the owners of and shareholders in radio, print and television media. Government officials have directed editorial policies. Ministers of Information and/or Communication have powers to control the media through licensing, appointment of senior staff and censorship. Self-censorship by the media is also widely practised in cultural matters, as well as when reporting about persons of rank. In Tonga, three journalists were imprisoned by a decision of Parliament for their expos of abuse of office by a Minister of the State. The Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) strongly objected to this action by the Tongan Parliament in 1996 as well as to the other violations or threats of violation of media freedom in the region. Freedom of information and media freedom need to be fostered.

Conclusion

There is no direct correlation between democracy and development in the South Pacific. Pre-existing forms of polity and society were not conducive to democratic norms. Colonialism tended to instrumentalize traditional structures for its own ends. The communities that exist tend to be exclusive and parochial. They do not on their own constitute a matrix for good governance. Indeed, the sense of community based on ethnicity and original inhabitants of a geographic area may lead to the denial of citizenship rights of other groups in society. National integration, human rights, multiculturalism, and peoples' participation in their governance, transparency and accountability remain significant challenges in the democratic transition of Pacific Island countries as they enter the new millennium.

Notes

1 These are kinship societies in contrast to market-dominated ones (Sahlins 1958: 2-3).
2 In terms of managerial abilities demonstrated by executing a major project, for instance, building a man's club house, as an orator, warrior, sorcerer, trader, cultivator and banker (Oliver 1955).
3 Amongst the Mekeo, Roro, groups around the Gulf of Papua, Wogeo off North New Guinea, the Buin of Bougainville and societies in

Solomons, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, heredity was the principle of ranking (Chowning 1977; Hau'ofa 1971; Codrington, 1891).

4 The Republic was declared by the coup-makers and not a majority of the people of Fiji who continue to hold a strong sense of loyalty to the British Queen. The first Republican Government did not reflect 'peoples' power'; it was a military dictatorship.

5 Elements of Australian media maintained that Dr Bavadra was an Indo-Fijian!

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