

## PREFACE

by

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The common thread which runs through each of these papers is spun from their shared concern with the process of American decolonization in the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Perhaps even more, this thread tends to be colored with a recurrent tint — the cultural appropriateness of various U.S. activities from the end of World War II to the present. Such a preoccupation is, of course, as justifiable as it is predictable. Culture is the key to nationhood and nationality has become almost synonymous with statehood. Thus, clearly the issue of cultural vitality can have important implications for the course, pace, and direction of decolonization.

Yet, inevitably as the concentrating lens of scrutiny is focused ever more tightly, the circle of examination excludes larger amounts of information. It is this phenomenon which provides much of the basis for my commentary since, in their substance, these six papers are highly commendable. Indeed, overall the conference papers both singly and collectively are a worthy addition to the literature of contemporary Micronesia.

Robert Kiste's "Overview of U.S. Policy" cogently argues the case against interpretations of American administrative practice in the TTPI which accord these practices the status of a coherent and deliberate

"policy." His attack on the "zoo" and/or "entrapment" theories is difficult to fault. Nevertheless, it may be that the emphasis on deliberateness unnecessarily precludes the affect of unintended consequences. Many, if not all, the elements of the alleged "zoo" theory, for example, would be compatible with Kiste's alternative explanation of military convenience as an unintentional effect. Thus, while there may have been no deliberate policy of isolating the Micronesians from Western influences, the same result may have occurred as a consequence of the practices favoring military interests.

"Quo Vadis" by William Tagupa maintains that colonial powers control the basic resources of time and space which set the agenda (or perhaps even determine whether or not there is to be an agenda) for decolonization. Since colonialism is inherently an asymmetrical relationship, the logic of the assertion is persuasive. Nevertheless, the observation leads one to wonder where the threshold is which separates the colonies which seize control of the decolonizing agenda by violence and those which are able to work toward independence using more pacific measures. Such an indicator might even assist the few remaining metropolises and their colonies to assess the implications of their approaches to decolonization.

The value of a practitioner's reflections can scarcely be gainsaid and this is all the more true when the practitioner is Leonard Mason and the reflections concern his experience of applied anthropology in Micronesia. Perhaps the only useful observation, therefore, I can make

on his paper is that neither the process nor the problems are novel to the TTPI. The British employed applied anthropologists for nearly a century to pursue indirect rule in various parts of the empire. Similarly, the problems of serving as an applied anthropologist are basically the same as those faced by academic policy-advisers from other disciplines such as political science and economics. Still, Mason has recourse to the rejoinder that the cultural dimension in anthropology may make the responsibility greater than for the other policy areas. Those of us from the disciplines might cavil but "culture is the key to nationhood."

While the three preceding papers treat broader themes in the U.S.-TTPI relationship, the final three papers serve as case studies into specific issues. Craig Severance's review of the Peace Corps experience, the assessment of American education policy by Karen Peacock; and Don Topping's examination of linguistic manipulation, however, do reveal common perceptions on the dilemma of development. How do outsiders effect change without changing things? The answer is clearly that this cannot be done and therefore the maximum consultation and cooperation of the developing peoples is essential.

Severance expressed the judgement that with regard to the Peace Corps such interaction did not always occur; that all too often it was a case of "doing for" rather than "doing with." Similar observations appear in the studies by Peacock and Topping. Again, the personal knowledge and the depth of scholarship in these three works are of an

order that makes their observations compelling. Thus the interesting questions center on what altered factors may have made for different results. What ought the U.S. have done to have prevented the tortured and tortuous path to decolonization we have witnessed to date? The alternatives are more implied than argued in these papers.

The fact that the U.S. never had a Colonial Office is crucial here; not just because the absence of such an institution created administrative and managerial problems but even more because this absence represented a form of national amnesia. The U.S. experienced colonial domination and a bloody war for national liberation. It is often said that those who forget the past are condemned to relive it. The message in all six of these conference papers seems to be that a nation which forgets its past might well inflict it on others.