

INTRODUCTION

WANSALAWARA - those who share the same ocean, in Tok Pisin - is a collection of essays submitted to my graduate seminar in South Pacific history in the Fall of 1985 and subsequently revised and expanded in the Pacific Research Seminar in Spring 1986. As the first attempt ever to publish such a volume of essays by graduate students in Pacific Islands history, this installment is an experiment, we hope not a terminal one. It gives our superior, prize-winning graduate students encouragement and enables them to share the initial fruits of their research with others in the field. It gives us some insight into the kinds of issues and problems that interest them. And not least, since all the essays are based on primary sources and touch upon critical historiographical and methodological issues in Pacific Islands history, this collection makes a contribution to the larger field as well. In short, the reasons for making this volume available to the public are self-evident. The really intriguing question is: why was such an exercise not undertaken earlier? The answer lies not in the quality of work done by our former graduates, the best of whom have become highly regarded professional scholars in their own right. Rather, the explanation lies in the tortuous development of the discipline of Pacific Islands history at the University of Hawaii.

Pacific Islands history developed at Hawaii in the late 1950s, separate from Hawaiian as well as European imperial history. Tom Murphy appears to have been the first person to have offered courses in Pacific Islands history at the University. He was not a trained Pacific specialist. Indeed, there

were few such specialists at that time anywhere in the world with the exception of the Australian National University where the first systematic Pacific Islands study began under the direction of Professors J.W. Davidson and H.E. Maude. Murphy came to the field via European imperial and British Commonwealth history, areas in which he regularly taught courses in the Department of History. In 1960-61, in addition to a course in Australian and New Zealand history, he offered a two part course in Pacific history, the first dealing with the islands before 1799, and the second covering the period since then. The following academic year, a graduate seminar was added, dealing with "selected topics and research papers in the history of Oceania, with special emphasis on the British colonies." No record survives of the kind of issues which were isolated for intensive discussion in the seminar, nor of the books which were used as prescribed readings. Oral evidence suggests that there was more emphasis on the internal social and political dynamics of the islands societies themselves and less on European actors and their policies. The seminar remained on the books for the following decade, but in 1966, the two-part 500-level course was compressed into one, titled "History of Oceania".

Murphy retired from active teaching in the early 1970s, and his Pacific courses were taken over by Gavan Daws, himself the first Pacific history graduate of this university and now Professor of Pacific history in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. Colin Newbury, visiting from Oxford University, also offered courses in Pacific and Commonwealth history. Daws retained the earlier structure of course offerings largely because of his heavy involvement in the Department's World Civilizations program in which, by all accounts, he became a brilliant

success as a teacher. Daws resigned and left for Australia in the summer of 1975. He was replaced in 1976 by a graduate of ANU, Tim Macnaught, a Fijian specialist.

Macnaught taught Pacific Islands and world history regularly in the late 1970s. In 1980, in response to increasing student enrollments and the difficulties of teaching the entire history of the Pacific Islands in one course, he embarked on a major restructuring of the Pacific offerings, in addition to resurrecting the Australia and New Zealand courses from their previously dormant state. "History of Oceania" was once again split into two courses, Pacific Islands History I and II, the former dealing with the period from pre-contact to colonial times (about the 1870s) and the latter covering the period since then. He retained the Pacific History Seminar as a purely reading course and added another, Pacific Research Seminar, for advanced students interested in writing and research. As he put it, this seminar would "allow me to share the real business of detailed research with my own students in the stimulating environment of a small seminar of enthusiasts." He hoped to get his students to work on a selected topic - depopulation in the Pacific islands was mentioned as one possibility - and intended to publish the results in a book.

But that was not to be. A year after submitting these proposals, Macnaught left the university to take up the vice-principalship of St. Xavier College in Victoria, Australia, where, at this writing, he is still teaching. While Macnaught was away on leave during 1981, Ian Campbell from Adelaide University was invited to teach Pacific history courses in Spring 1981 as a visiting professor. But Campbell was deterred from taking up a permanent position in the Department by the all-too-familiar exorbitant cost of living

in Honolulu. However, the flagging spirit of a small coterie of Pacific history students was temporarily revived by the presence of Greg Dening, author of the masterful Islands and Beaches, who visited the Department of History as its Distinguished Burns Professor in Spring 1981. His lectures on "Native and Stranger: The bound-together history of kama'aina and haole in Polynesia" were a resounding success and helped to retrieve the study of Pacific history from the brink of possible oblivion. Ken Inglis, another Burns Chair holder from Australia, was also to perform with great distinction four years later.

Stewart Firth of Macquarie University in New South Wales arrived in the Fall of 1982 to take up the Pacific position in the Department of History. Firth was a prized catch, a highly respected scholar with a solid reputation as a teacher. But the Department's, and the students', hopes were soon dashed when, within months of being here, Firth gave notice of his resignation. The high cost of living in Honolulu had taken its toll once again.

Discouraged by the rapid turnover of its Pacific faculty and urged to reaffirm its long-standing commitment to the promotion of Pacific Islands history, the Department of History in 1983 appointed two Pacific historians, Dr. David Hanlon and myself to permanent positions. It was, we believe, a salutary move in the right direction! The presence of two full time Pacific faculty provided much-needed stability in the field, which led to a marked increase in student enrollments. It soon became evident that time was ripe for further expansion in our Pacific offerings. In 1985, we introduced a survey course at the 200 level. The Pacific History Seminar was divided into two separate courses, one dealing with Micronesian history taught by David and the other on the history of the South Pacific to be offered by me. It was a

division of labor which enabled us to capitalize on our respective research interests. The Pacific Research Seminar was retained in its original format as envisioned by Macnaught. With these changes now in place, we believe that an era in the evolution of Pacific Islands history at this university has come to an end; we now stand on the threshold of another, more optimistic one.

For me, trained as a research student in the Anglo-Australasian academic tradition, the system of graduate seminars was a novel and challenging experience which offered exciting prospects for intensive discussion of selected problems with knowledgeable and enthusiastic graduate students. For the first two years, I adopted the "great books" approach, discussing the major historical works in the field. In 1985, I decided to focus on a single region, and chose Melanesia as the seminar area. For 14 successive weeks, we examined diverse topics in Melanesian history: the theoretical and methodological issues involved; the debate about the pattern and pace of prehistoric settlement of the region; the nature of culture contact; the impact of European trading on indigenous social and economic systems; the experience of colonialisms; protest, war, decolonization and the dilemmas of independence. Each week students took turns leading the discussion. There was never a dull moment as the seminar frequently veered off in controversial directions, touching upon such issues as the politics and ethics of research in the islands and the relevance of the dichotomy between insider and outsider perspectives.

There were other moments of fun-filled discussion when history truly came alive. One session which stands out in my mind was the discussion of William Bell's murder in 1927 at Gwee'abe in the Solomons. The required reading for the session was Roger Keesing's and Peter Corris' brilliantly readable book,

Lightning Meets the West Wind. The seminar leader decided to hold a court of inquiry into the murder. He appointed himself the chief investigating officer and divided the class into two sections, one representing Bell and the other Basiana, the Kwaio ramo who murdered the district officer. Each side gave informed testimony about the character and temperament of the two protagonists, their respective social and cultural traditions, the history and nature of European penetration of Malaita, and the mounting Kwaio resentment against foreign encroachment on their way of life. At the end of three hours of "hearings" we were still uncertain about the real motivations behind Bell's murder, though the general social and historical context within which it took place became abundantly clear.

In addition to leading weekly discussions, the seminar participants were also required to submit written work for formal evaluation. They were given two alternatives: writing two book reviews and a long historiographical essay, or submitting a research paper based, as far as possible, on primary sources. About half the class, those who had little previous experience in historical research or those who wanted to broaden their knowledge of the literature, chose the former. Space has prevented us from including a sampling of these. Others who had a more focused research interest chose the research option. These contributions from those students who chose to proceed to the Pacific Research Seminar, are included in this volume.

The choice of research topics was left to the students themselves. In four of the five cases, these are or will be the subject of dissertations or theses. The five essays included here follow a rough chronological sequence. Roberta Sprague's paper on the Wilkes expedition to Fiji opens the collection. It focuses not so much on the goals and purposes of the mission -

about which much has been written in any case - but on what the explorers' records tell us about the aspects of Fijian society and politics at the time. This is not as easy a task as might be imagined for comments about the indigenous people are frustratingly sparse in the voluminous records of the expedition. As Roberta says: "It is easy to know what the Americans were thinking, for they recorded their thoughts voluminously. It is harder to determine what motivated the Fijians." This problem besets most researchers working on remoter periods in Pacific Islands history. But Roberta succeeds well in teasing out intriguing ethnographic comments from the records not only about the Fijian society but also about the perceptions and prejudices of the explorers themselves. Melanesians, among whom Fijians were included, came in for especially savage commentary. Horatio Hale, the ethnologist on the expedition, called them "sullen, sly, treacherous, indocile, stubborn, and of cold temperament." But the encounter was not always one-sided. "Both sides approached each other with curiosity and wariness," Roberta observes; "cross-cultural contact was an interesting melange of amusing adaptation, attempted manipulation, and, occasionally, hostile confrontation." This observation applies with much force to all other contributions in this volume.

In the second essay, Paul D'Arcy looks at the second stage of culture contact as exploring and trading ventures gave way to more protracted and intensive exchanges between the Europeans and the islanders. This period in Pacific Islands history is probably the most well researched; some of the best works in Pacific historiography are devoted to this era. The general consensus, by now an orthodoxy, is that culture contact was a dynamic and multifaceted affair. The "fatal impact" thesis, inspired by romantic travellers and self-interested missionaries, was turned on its head, perhaps

too precipitously, as Dening's account of Marquesan history suggests. In one case where the earlier observers were clearly wrong was in asserting the role of muskets in depopulating the islands where they were introduced in large numbers. The exaggeration in this contention has been exposed by K.R. Howe and Dorothy Shineberg, among others. Paul supports this revisionist view in his study of guns and warfare in late 19th century Malaita, a time frame which affords useful contrasts and comparisons with Shineberg's studies on an earlier period. The introduction of rifles did not cause a major social or demographic disruption in Malaitan society; on the contrary, Paul argues, guns were more important for their symbolic value - as seen, for example, in the case of the Kwaio ramo for whom the possession of firearms was a potent symbol of manhood. He sees significance in the fact that Basiana chose to use his musket as a club rather than as a firing weapon to kill William Bell. Even after the introduction of rifles, warfare was still conducted according to certain norms of ritual exchange, a point that Ron Adams makes in another context in his In The Land of Strangers (about Tanna). Paul concludes that despite improvements in firearms technology in the late 19th century, "the use of guns in indigenous fighting on Malaita was successfully modified to suit traditions towards warfare."

The importance of cultural continuity and the influence of traditional forces upon alien institutions and values is also emphasized by David Richardson in his essay on "Custom and the Cross on Tanna." He questions the view that political uprisings on Tanna were controlled by American libertarian groups keen to realize their dreams of a tax-free haven or inspired by descendants of French settlers anxious to avoid being dominated by the Anglophone majority. David emphasizes the role of indigenous forces, and

places particular emphasis on the islanders' opposition to the power and the influence of the Presbyterian church which attempted to eradicate many elements of kastom such as kava drinking, traditional dancing and initiation rites. By focusing on the 19th Century indigenous political dynamics in reaction to the impact of outside influences, David makes a strong case for his argument that in fact the French were manipulated by their allies in the struggle for cultural continuity, highlighting the many ironies involved in Vanuatu's history, and in contrast to those interpretations which suggest that the John Frum movement adherents were "helpless victims of cunning sophisticates from abroad." His examination of the John Frum movement as an example of traditionally-inspired, islander-oriented collection action has parallels in indigenous responses in the Solomons, Fiji, and other parts of Melanesia and elsewhere in the Pacific.

One of the most dramatic examples of an indigenous revolt took place in New Caledonia in 1878. That episode is invested with a great deal of symbolic significance by kanak nationalists today. Chantal Ferraro examines the aftermath of the revolt and the attempts made by the French colonial government to pacify the indigenous people in order to consolidate their political and economic position in the islands. The French settler attitude was articulated in its harshest form by Commander Testard in 1879: "... one must begin by destroying this population if one is to remain securely in the country. The only convenient way to come to an end, would be to organize hunting parties, like we do wolves in France, with several times a day at the beginning of the rainy season." Along with such violent campaigns of pacification, the government also embarked upon a scheme of colonisation libre, settlement of European families as cultivators in the nascent colony.

Land delimitation and the introduction of foreign laborers were two means, among others, to attain this end. Chantal paints a well researched and harrowing picture of French colonial repression in New Caledonia, and concludes: "There is no room for dissent in the French colonial system." To those wanting to get an insight into the intensity of the kanak struggle for independence today, this essay has much to offer. The struggle for independence in New Caledonia goes on, and with so much at stake for all the parties involved, the French government, the colons and the kanaks, it is difficult to know whether independence will come peacefully or through tragic, cataclysmic violence.

All non-French islands in Melanesia, however, have achieved independence, Fiji since 1970, Papua New Guinea since 1975, Solomons since 1978 and Vanuatu since 1980. With independence came new pressures and demands as island peoples and leaders began the process of working out their destinies themselves after a long period of colonial rule. Artists and intellectuals joined hands with others to meet the formidable challenges of nation-building as they examined and attempted to reconcile their pre-colonial and colonial heritage in poems, short stories, drama and other creative arts. Richard Hamasaki explores one facet of this phenomenon of literary revival in the independent nation of Papua New Guinea. His focus is on poetry and the poetic tradition in the colonial and the post-independence era. By examining the role and the work of such individuals as Allan Natachee, Ulli Bier, John Kasaipwalova and others, Richard demonstrates the dynamic and dialectical relationship between the social and political situation in PNG and the tone and content of the emerging creative literature. But he also attempts to understand the PNG situation in the larger context of the emerging Third World

Literature, especially in Africa. To this end, he examines the applicability of the Brash/Soyinka "theory" developed in the African context, to the PNG literary situation. Many problems, frustrations, impediments lie ahead for PNG poets and writers, and these will have to be faced with honesty and integrity. For in the words of John Kasaipwalova, authentic art will not be born until

I have ripped apart the house of my soul
To drag before my mirror my naked self.

The essays included in this volume, then, cover a wide range of topics - race relations, warfare, colonialism, resistance movements, the emergence of modern literature - reflecting the interests of the different contributors. They show that a variety of factors, both indigenous and exogenous to the area, need to be considered to get a fuller picture of the historical experience of the Pacific Islands peoples. They reflect, too, the incredible diversity and richness of Pacific Islands history as well as the rewards and problems involved in attempting to understand them. I found the essays included here a pleasure to read, and I hope that students and friends of the Pacific Islands will, too.