

Peter Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford, *Protest and Dissent in the Colonial Pacific*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1984. Pp. 200, illustrated, notes, bibliography, index. F\$8.00, paper.

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Protest movements, as defined by Hempenstall and Rutherford, are positive expressions of discontent with the nature of colonial rule. As movements with a program they are to be distinguished from resistance movements that are simple "failure[s] to cooperate." *Protest and Dissent* is a history of selected protest movements in the Pacific Islands. The authors have written case studies of the Western Samoa *mau* movement, the Tonga Ma'a Tonga Kautaha, the 1959 strike in Fiji, the Spanish wars on Ponape, and the transformation cults and myth dreams on the Huan Peninsula of Papua New Guinea. These case studies are set in the context of a discussion of protest movements in the Pacific Islands generally.

On a theoretical level the book is a contribution to an understanding of the nature of anticolonial movements generally. It is likewise, say the authors, an attempt to offer some generalizations about the nature of Pacific history, a beginning effort to construct a theoretical structure for the mass of empirical studies that have been published in the discipline in the last generation. On a substantive level the case studies are fascinating simply as descriptive accounts.

The essence of colonialism is that an alien authority exercises political and economic suzerainty over a subject people. Typically, and this has

certainly been the case in the Pacific, the governors may also assume an attitude of cultural and ideological hegemony. These rulers usually develop a rationale to legitimize their power, some moral reason why their presence is for the sake of their subject peoples. In combination these features of dominance create the matrix of protest. Colonialism varied in its degree of intensity and penetration from place to place, but it “was not considered the root of all evil by Pacific peoples” (p. 15). Colonialism sought domination, but subject peoples were never under total subjugation. In Samoa, both Germany and New Zealand “remained in a real sense the prisoner of [their] island collaborators” (pp. 29, 32). Interestingly, colonialism created institutions that gave people a forum from which they could protest; trade unions are a good example.

It is obvious that the administering powers of the several Pacific Island societies accelerated the development of protest movements by their attitudes and policies. Administrators were often amazingly dense, uninformed, or stubbornly stupid about the nature of the people with whom they were dealing. Inept rulership was compounded by the patronizing racism of the colonial rulers, and it was doubtless a source of comfort to colonialists to believe that the people they ruled were not too bright. For instance, the administrator of Western Samoa declared in 1918: “the natives themselves have not had sufficient training or education to enable them to appreciate and understand the principles for which the Allies are fighting, or to vote intelligently upon such an important question as the destiny of Samoa” (p. 34).

In Tonga and Fiji, Europeans had no confidence in the ability of Islanders to manage their own affairs in a modern economy and so interfered in local cooperative self-help efforts. Local European traders were also alarmed by any attempt by Islanders to compete with European businessmen. The Tonga Ma’a Tonga Kautaha incident in Tonga is a good example of the overbearing presumption of Europeans in dealing with Islanders. In this particular instance, however, the tables were turned by local courts and a wily king, George II. Out of this affair the king of Tonga managed to assert the supremacy of the Tongan constitution over the protectorate treaty with Britain and of the Tongan king over the British consul, who, this event established, was to act in an advisory capacity only and whose advice the Tongan government was not obliged to implement.

Hempenstall and Rutherford categorize Pacific Islands protest movements according to tactics, objectives, and type. Tactics ranged from boycotting (as was the case with the *mau* in Western Samoa) to deadly violence (Ponape). Social, economic, and political objectives were all

interwoven, although one of these might have more importance in a given movement. Until the last generation, surprisingly few movements had independence as a goal. In Western Samoa the *Mau e pule* of the German years was an effort to restore power and status to the title-holders in the traditional political structure. It operated in tandem with the Oloa movement, which sought to maximize profits to Samoan agriculturalists, as did the Toeaina Club organized during the administration of the country by New Zealand. The *mau* of the late 1920s and 1930s had multiple objectives and multiple causes. One of its leaders declared self-government to be a *mau* objective; others in the movement disagreed. It was very evident that the New Zealand administration, which concentrated on public health and social concerns, failed to appreciate the significance of the political concerns of the Samoans.

Protest movements have often included a demand for cultural respect and a *cri de coeur* for social and economic equality. This may have been part of a hidden agenda for some movements, but Hempenstall and Rutherford show it to have been quite significant in Melanesia. Not all protest movements were anticolonial. The King movement in New Zealand began as an effort to create a national unity. Nor were the movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Papua New Guinea "purely" anticolonial. Rather, "Their aims synthesized anti-government, traditionalist values with self-help modernizing programs for local communities" (p. 11).

Hempenstall and Rutherford describe and analyze several types of protest movements, including proto-cooperative movements, forms of industrial protest, forms of violent protest, and protest movements in religious form. With some reservations about the term cargo, they place cargo cults in the latter category.

Proto-cooperative groups such as the Fijian Viti Company (which began in 1912), the Samoan Oloa (1904), and the Tonga Ma'a Tonga Kautaha (1909) were early twentieth-century forerunners of the New Hebrides Malekula Native Company founded in 1939 and the Tangitang Society of Abiang in the Gilberts founded in 1938. The latter two groups included mystical, millenarian elements, which the Tongan and Samoan groups did not have. European transculturites were part of the organization and management of these groups.

The 1959 Fiji strike is a case study of industrial protest, caused by oil-industry workers who felt they were underpaid. It was effectively led by an Anglo-Indian-Polynesian named James Anthony. One of the unique aspects of the strike was its working class basis, as both Indians and Fijians combined in a common cause. It assumed racial overtones

and an anti-European stance as it progressed. The strike was finally put down by high-ranking Fijian chiefs who appealed to the Fijian strikers not to be misled by non-Fijians, that is, not to permit themselves to be corrupted by Indian agitators. Thereupon this short-lived socioeconomic alliance collapsed as the Fijians returned to their first identity.

The total number of deaths in violent protest against European incursion is not as dramatic as in some colonialized areas, but according to Hempenstall and Rutherford, the aftereffects were often more devastating. Many Islanders had warrior traditions and had developed tactics and weapons that served them well against European troops, but they were finally unable to deal with the advantages of the Westerners. The Europeans were tenacious and determined to a degree unmatched by Islanders, who were typically unable to combine with each other to fend them off. Different people of particular island groups often shared no ideological commitment to each other, and sometimes as ancient enemies they were precluded from making alliances with each other against a common foe. The revolts of the Ponape districts against first their Spanish and later their German rulers showed that a people with martial tradition could stand off a European power, albeit for a short time. However, by the late nineteenth century, according to Hempenstall and Rutherford, the Spaniards had pretty much lost the will to rule. The Ponapean revolt against the German administration enjoyed very short-lived success because “German retribution was swift and brutal” (p. 118).

Protests in religious form have appeared in a number of Pacific locales, but this analysis is concentrated on the millenarian movements of Papua New Guinea. Cargo cult is the term most often associated with these millennial/religious movements, but the authors believe this term is too simple to describe the complex movements of Melanesia that combine religion with material, social, and political aspirations. Rather than being irrational, illogical efforts to extract concessions from the European colonialists (which is the way some have seen them), more sophisticated explanations have seen these movements as efforts to resolve problems in Melanesian terms. They seek to explain European success and then to emulate that success. The religious aspect of millenarianism is explained by the fact that for Melanesians the material and nonmaterial are integrated, not divided as in European world-views.

There have been four kinds of explanations for cargo movements, according to Hempenstall and Rutherford. Most commonly they have been explained as protest or resistance movements with political over-

tones. The "Vailala Madness" of the Elema people of the Papua Gulf in the 1920s seems to have been a religious movement designed to prepare the people for the return of their ancestors, but the colonial administration saw it as an "incipient" political rebellion and acted to suppress it. There are also religious movements of "dynamic aspirations," which are concerned with economic deprivation, but which also have a "positive, moral content." One objective of these movements is to rehabilitate the Melanesian people in a new world "in which kanaka and white man cooperate with each other," and in which "native integrity is restored and moral equivalence with the whites [is] achieved" (p. 124). There are movements which seek "salvation" for the community, salvation meaning a search for religious redemption, integrity, identity, peace, wholeness, health, and well-being. A fourth type of movement seeks to alter the nature of Melanesian society and is a continuation of changes begun before but accelerated by the advent of the European. Such movements build upon a dynamic already present in Melanesian society. As cults they can bring about social change more rapidly than secular movements.

Hempenstall and Rutherford suggest that by considering Melanesian millenarian movements as "experimental conduits into the future," a wide range of theoretical approaches to their analysis is possible. Also, to understand that they are considered by those involved as rational responses to a situation makes them more amenable to rational understanding (p. 126).

The authors offer some guidelines for future research into movements of protest and dissent. Researchers, they say, must understand that many types of movements have political implications. Millenarian transformation movements need to be understood as more than just "conservative, rebellious symptoms of social disintegration"; they are also "forward-looking, positive" phenomena with roots in pre-Western cults and myths. The role of social classes and economic forces needs to be examined more closely, as do ethnic differences. Finally, it must be recognized that protest is a "richly textured phenomenon." The history of colonial-subject people relations is full of examples of cooperation and collaboration, oppression and obedience. Individuals who stood up to colonialism have become exemplars of early nationalism and patriotism. Hempenstall and Rutherford point out that current forms of neocolonialism, such as the economic domination by European multinational corporations, may stoke the fires of new kinds of anticolonial protest movements.

Because of its implications for protest movements worldwide, this

book merits a larger audience than it is likely to get. Certainly all students of the Pacific Islands are much in debt to Peter Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford for this fine effort.

André Itéanu. *La ronde des échanges. De la circulation aux valeurs chez les Orokaiva*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1983. Pp. 355. Fr 49.50.

*Reviewed by Valerio Valeri, University of Chicago*

This study attempts to give a coherent picture of the culture of the Orokaiva (Papua New Guinea) by showing that it is based on a complex relationship between the world of spirits (situated in the wild) and the world of human society. Furthermore, the study claims that different stages of the relationship between the two worlds correlate with different stages in the process of differentiation of society and of the process that constitutes the human subject. Because of the latter correlation, the author first presents the principles of Orokaiva culture (or "ideology" as he calls it) through an analysis of the rituals of birth, initiation, and death. All these rituals are ultimately made possible by the complex symbolic relationship established between men and pigs.

Appropriately, then, the book begins by discussing the rituals connected with the birth of a child and the first year of life, together with the practices, some of them ritual, by which the pig is domesticated. In both cases, a being believed to come from the unstable world of spirits situated in the wild is differentiated from it and given a fixed place in human society.

The symbolic association of pigs and men is further displayed by their equivalence in the exchange between men and spirits. The spirits give pigs to humans, and by a strict application of the rule of reciprocity humans should give their children in return. But this direct reciprocity, which would make human life impossible, is delayed in the initiation ritual by offering the spirits a simulacrum of the children's death. Inasmuch as it makes a child's life secure, initiation is his definitive implanting in society. But it is also an occasion for the reconstitution of society in its fundamental articulations. Indeed, this ritual involves first the collapse of all social differences, then their progressive reconstitution.

Each stage of this reconstitution is characterized by a different modality of exchange involving different symbolic objects and different