EDITOR'S FORUM

PACIFIC HISTORY AS SEEN FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

by David Routledge

Introduction

Pacific Islands historiography--in the sense of expressions of opinion as to the nature and purpose of Pacific history writing--has accumulated considerably in volume since J. W. Davidson first published his inaugural lecture as Professor of Pacific History at Australian National University in 1955.[1] This is not to be wondered at. What is perhaps surprising is the pertinacity of doubts as to what Pacific history is or ought to be, and doubts also as to the proper way to pursue its study. The prevailing definition has been unsatisfactorily narrow, appearing in particular to eliminate from consideration the interactions of Pacific Islanders among themselves. It is doubtful if any of those who have written about what Pacific history ought to be would admit that they meant to deny altogether a place for Pacific Islanders in their own history. On the other hand, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Islanders have not been regarded as its main protagonists by definition.

The origin of this unsatisfactory state of affairs lies, I believe, in the assertion that Europeans will inevitably be party to the processes that Pacific historians may legitimately study. Davidson himself once stated that, "We limit ourselves to the period during which non-European societies have been in contact with the West."[2] A recent reviewer, before going on to praise a study of an aspect of European activity in Fiji, said, "the history of post-European Oceania is, first and foremost, an era of

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foreign domination."[3] Both statements may be true (ignoring the semantic difficulties in equating "history" with "era" in the second), even though modern historians are becoming increasingly confident in the absence of documentary evidence, and thus of dealing with non-literate contexts. The statements reflect, however, an attitude of mind--and thus an orientation of approach--that harbors a potentially unproductive fragmentation of the study of the Pacific Island past.

It is this which is the danger. It may be accepted that non-Islander historians have become less Eurocentric in their writing. It may further be acknowledged that historiographical ruminations are less important than actual results. But as long as there is the possibility for Pacific Islanders to read statements of purpose about Pacific history that appear to deny them what they consider to be their rightful place, there is also the possibility that they will reject as irrelevant to themselves the work of those who have made such statements. The result would be a fragmentation of effort just at a time when the possibilities for productive interchange are beginning to assume significant dimensions. The purpose of this paper is to review the statements that have led to the present situation and to suggest certain clarifications that need to be accepted in order to reduce the likelihood of Islander and non-Islander Pacific history going separate ways. It is less concerned to review the achievement of the last thirty-five years than to establish a baseline from which work should now proceed.

European-oriented Perceptions of Pacific History

Davidson argued in his inaugural lecture that Pacific history belongs ultimately in the field of modern history, of which "the primary interest . . . has been the evolution of Western Europe," and further, that it has "its more immediate origin" in imperial history, concerned with the expansion of European influence throughout the world.[4] From this it followed that Pacific history should focus on the different kinds of European activity (exploring, trading, evangelizing, governing, etc.) as these impinged on the lives of the people of the Islands, and that the center of interest should be shifted from metropolitan capitals to the Islands themselves. Davidson did not emphasize what might be termed the autonomous activities of the people. Although he referred to the need to understand "indigenous tradition" and "the role traditionally ascribed to a political leader," and stated that "few subjects would, perhaps, be more rewarding than a study of the growth of indigenous participation in the money economy,"[5] he did not make explicit the status of Pacific

Islanders as the major protagonists in their own history. Studies of immigrants, of the communities they founded, and of the industries they established were all mentioned in the course of the lecture. Only in the conclusion was there a suggestion that "analyses of the indigenous forces that have . . . contributed to the making of the contemporary Pacific" should also be part of the Pacific historian's brief, and then only in relation to the primary study of the transformation which has been the result of "the impact of the Western world."[6]

These precepts formed the basis on which the Pacific History Department at Canberra--as it was then called--set to work, and detailed studies of the different kinds of European activity and of immigrant communities began to accumulate.[7] Because these studies centered on outsiders, even if the arena of action was the Islands, a knowledge of Pacific languages was not necessary and students were not required to seek such knowledge. This was in contrast to those in the department working in the field of Southeast Asian history. It is interesting to note in the present context, therefore, that Southeast Asian historians early accepted the necessity for an autonomous history of the region--in the sense defined above.[8] But even Davidson's certainty of the need for Island-centered history and the development of techniques capable of dealing with the multicultural situations he believed to be its essence were questioned. Munz was doubtful of the literal possibility of a history that was not firmly rooted in a European cultural and methodological context, warning of the cultural arrogance of foisting upon non-Europeans "an idea of their past which is assimilated to our own idea of our past"; he concluded that non-European history must remain "at the most . . . an adjunct to European history."[9]

Davidson himself dealt with some of the most obviously dubious points raised by Munz, particularly those concerned to assert an intrinsically Judaeo-Christian element in the notion of an absolute chronology focused on the birth of Christ. The force of his rebuttal was substantially vitiated, however, when he concluded that his ideas and those of Munz were not as far apart as it might at first appear. In particular, he made clear that his conception of Pacific history would have to be satisfactory in terms of the European historical tradition in order to be satisfactory to himself. He suggested that the cause of Munz's misapprehension was an underestimation of the pervasive effect of European influence throughout the past five hundred years, and reiterated the opinion that Pacific historians should not attempt to penetrate the Pacific Island past before Europeans appeared on the scene.[10] The post-European Pacific Islander past on which Europeans had not impinged

was also excluded by his insistence on a preoccupation with multicultural situations. In doing this, Davidson not only seemed to establish a methodologically conservative discipline, but to deny a concern with the continuity of the Pacific Islander past, going back through the colonial period to the period of first contact with Europeans and ultimately to the original peopling of the Islands by their first inhabitants.

By breaking Pacific history out of its matrix of imperial history and establishing it as a specialized branch of the subject of history as a whole, concerned with the multicultural situations of the post-European contact period, Davidson began the process of "decolonization." How successfully his initial impulse has been built upon, however, is a matter open to doubt. European explorers, traders, beachcombers, settlers and planters, missionaries, diplomatists, politicians, and bureaucrats have all received attention. Part of the process of understanding the full ramifications of their actions has involved an examination of the Pacific Island context and the reaction of Pacific Islanders, but this has been done as by an outsider looking in. Despite a number of significant exceptions, the central concern has remained the analysis of European action, Davidson himself noted the pioneering work of his colleague, Harry Maude, when he sought to analyze the effect on Pacific Island societies of European beachcombers and castaways. Even more significant for the argument of this paper was Maude's celebrated monograph on the Gilbertese *boti,* which "commenced," in his own words, "with the coming of Tematawerebure and his followers from Samoa in approximately A.D. 1400."[11] This was no study constrained by absolute chronology, by methodological conservatism, or by the European distinction between history and prehistory. Maude himself cited the achievement of Raymond Firth, who, besides analyzing his material as a functional anthropologist, looked again at it as a historian.[12] More recently, Greg Dening's account of the Marquesas Islands from the time of European contact until 1880 was a tour de force of the ethnohistorical method, which seeks to combine the insights of history and anthropology.[13] Marshall Sahlins, anthropologist par excellence, is presently preoccupied with a history of the wars between Bau and Rewa in early nineteenth-century Fiji. This list is by no means exhaustive, but the point remains. Studies oriented from the Islander point of view have been made only infrequently,

Even the role of Islander practitioners has been questioned, and done so, moreover, in such a way as to justify the prevailing situation. O. H. K. Spate, for example, claimed that because there have not been sufficient numbers of Islanders properly trained in the European-con-

ceived discipline to take over, Europeans "cannot help but make the running." Should they not, he warned, "the history goes by default, and its very raw material may be lost."[14] Those Islanders who have chosen to write within the European-established tradition have been criticized either for what they do or what they do not do. In the course of a review of Sione Latukefu's *Church and State in Tonga,* Noel Rutherford chided the author for not making full use of the special advantages Pacific Islanders enjoy when they write their own history.[15] He did not say precisely what these were or how they might be integrated with the European tradition. And when he wrote that Lātūkefu had thus let slip through his fingers a chance to say something quite rare, he left a certain sense of mystery about what exactly had been missed. Islanders have also been chided for opting out altogether, as when--confronted with such insuperable obstacles to European style history as the absence of an absolute chronology and the impossible blurring of the categories of myth and historical fact--they have chosen to write in the form of poems, stories, novels, and other fiction.[16] Sometimes the criticism has been made to cut both ways. Rutherford said that the ponderous gravity of Lātūkefu's writing resulted in scholarly history but unexciting literature.

This kind of negative attitude--instead of a simple recognition that Firth's *History and Tradition of Tikopia* and Maude's study of the Gilbertese *boti* pointed the road to follow--has led to an unwarranted degree of self-satisfaction in certain quarters. Some non-Islander historians have considered themselves free, in the words of Kerry Howe, to continue "to do what can be done, and generally to do it well,"[17] that is, to continue writing about the Pacific past so as to emphasize the importance of Europeans. Justification for this approach has not been achieved without the expression of a certain amount of doubt. John Young wrote in 1979 that Pacific history "has become an ambiguous concept and is in danger of becoming an incomprehensible one."[18] His concern was prompted by a consideration of the first volume of Spate's tremendous study of the Pacific as an "artefact," on the one hand, and the Canberra collection entitled *More Pacific Island Portraits* on the other. Spate himself was careful to define his work as "a study of the Pacific, not of the Pacific peoples," and its purpose, "to explicate the process by which the greatest blank on the map became a nexus of global commercial and strategic relations." He admitted, moreover, that his study would in all likelihood be among the last essays in an obsolescent genre, "a requiem for an era of historiography."[19] Young saw the difficulty as being how to accommodate under the same rubric

world-encompassing analysis and island-oriented vignettes written by historians troubled with misgivings as to the feasibility of what they were trying to do, and also their qualifications for success. Young congratulated these historians on their achievement, but regretted the absence of Islander contributors to the collection.

Spate himself, clear in his own mind that he was not writing about the peoples of the Pacific, was not so certain what Islander historians should be trained for:

> . . . certainly not exclusive rights to the writing of Islands history, but just as certainly a role which is more than simply explaining their own view of themselves and their story, and what it is like to be on the receiving end of colonialism . . . the right to have their own view of their history built in as a functional, indeed a foundational part of the structure.[20]

This statement is indicative of the insidiousness of Eurocentric attitudes, Pacific history will center on Pacific Islanders and this must be accepted as such, by definition. It is the views and the record of the activities of others that should be regarded as being "built in." The qualification of the term "functional" with "foundational" suggests that Spate was aware of this to an extent, but a radical revision of the conception of Pacific history, and the way its writing should be approached, is apparently necessary among many non-Islander historians.

The achievements of Pacific historians working in the European-oriented tradition were recently reviewed by Howe.[21] He bluntly concluded that unless the prevalent burrowing after every available scrap of information about ever more narrowly defined topics gives way to something more constructive, the discipline is in danger of losing all sense of purpose. His proposed future directions, however, were disappointingly vague. He accepted the propriety of the previous generation's concentration on "the social, economic, political, and intellectual changes experienced by island societies as a result of their ever-increasing interaction with Europeans and Western influences generally," and was careful to make clear that he was not being critical of information-gathering itself. He believes, with Davidson, that empiricist research at the micro-level needs to be based upon "certain generalizations," but, again with Davidson, did not detail what these should be. His recommendations, therefore, largely involved organizing the same material in ways that would hopefully be more effective: in histories of individual

islands and groups; in synoptic histories of the region as a whole; in studies organized thematically, on a comparative basis, and of the region in various wider contexts. Only his last suggestion, a plea for more interdisciplinary investigation, contained something new in that it alluded to the need for a greater use of theory. He believes it would be sufficient, however, to borrow theory from the social sciences (he did not specify which). Moreover, in referring to Dening's discussion of the ethnohistorical technique, he failed to address one of its most important points. The historian, of whatever inclination, must develop and modify his own analytical tools or else run the risk of suffering the nervousness and ambivalence consequent in finding himself in a kind of no-man's land between two areas of study. Howe took some of his own advice in his "new South Sea Islands history from first settlement to colonial rule."[22] The book is a major and welcome contribution to Pacific historical studies, but it does exemplify some of the prevailing Eurocentric preoccupations. The study was thematically organized, but the author freely admits that much was left out--on the grounds of scant knowledge, but also in the belief that the piling of example on example could become otiose. Micronesia was thus ignored altogether and Melanesia dealt with in a final section that not only has something of the feeling of an afterword, but brings out the extent to which the history of the Islands--as considered from the point of view of the inhabitants--is fragmented to the point where meaningful synopsis is impossible to achieve. In his preface, Howe wrote that people in the Islands might disapprove of his work being based on printed sources and European scholarship, justifying his approach on the grounds that "modern Pacific history exists in the absence of as yet established alternative perceptions."[23]

The purpose of the remainder of this article is to suggest that there is such a perception--that of Pacific Islanders of their own history--with which there must be an accommodation if students of the Pacific past are not to become divided into two separate camps, each regarding the work of the other as irrelevant to its own purpose.

Pacific Islanders' Perceptions of Pacific History

Experience teaching at the University of the South Pacific has been an important influence on the views expressed below. Students there demand the opportunity to study a history that is relevant to themselves, and that relates to *their* past, They do not wish to ignore altogether the spread of European influence, but rather to examine it in

such a way as to relate it to their central concern: the past of their own societies. The legitimacy of such a demand has been recognized in many non-European contexts (as I have acknowledged above) to the point of becoming a truism. It has been stated explicitly on a number of important occasions, and Davidson and some at least of his colleagues have come to accept these precepts--without actually spelling them out--in their work on the Islands generally.[24]

It is the confused nature of some recent statements that justifies this article, for expressions of purpose are sometimes noticed more than is warranted by their casual nature. Matters of particular concern include the attitude toward oral evidence, the nature of a time frame and the delineation of temporal relationships appropriate to the multicultural context, and the study of social categories rather than simple sequences of events. I do not argue that traditional preoccupations should be abandoned, only that these other matters should receive adequate attention. My purpose, as stated above, is to point to the danger of the further development of an arid fragmentation of the study of Pacific history: Islander-oriented historians, on the one hand, accusing Europeans of being neocolonial in their approach, concerned to perpetuate their own dominance of the history-writing process and thus denigrating the wish of Islanders to study their own history as they believe it should be studied; and Europeans, on the other hand, dismissing Islanders as inadequately trained and therefore incapable of writing within the Western historiographical tradition at all.

It should perhaps be emphasized that admitting the possibility of a different kind of Pacific history does not necessarily imply some sort of relativist stance. The nineteenth-century belief that "what actually happened" in the past was a defined entity that historians could grasp, and then, by their writing, make accessible to their audience, has long since crumbled. Croce and Collingwood demonstrated the extent to which history writing is the product of the historian's individuality, his scholarly attitude and rigorously objective analytical method notwithstanding. E. H. Carr compared Acton's conviction that he and his colleagues could forge their way along the road to "ultimate history" with Sir George Clark's opinion that historians of his generation expected their work to be superseded again and again, as knowledge of the past was processed through minds of different identity, purpose, and point of view. Carr believed that the difference was a reflection of Victorian "clear-eyed self-confidence," in contrast to the "bewilderment and distracted scepticism" of the post-1945 era.[25] This was to underestimate the effect of advances in the techniques of the discipline, and of the vast

proliferation of material available to historical analysis. It also failed to give Clark his due, both for recognizing these developments and for dismissing as irrelevant and worthless the scepticism of the complete relativist. Acton's vision of ultimate history might have dimmed irretrievably as historians realized that the "subject matter even of a narrow, particular history" was inexhaustible, that "the nearer we come to 'total cover,' the further we move from the primitive historian-like exactness."[26] This did not mean, however, that because the historian's cover was so much less than total, a whole range of interpretations was possible, with any one as good as any other.

The effect of the coming together of these two trends--realization that history changes as society changes, and increasing awareness of the potential of modern techniques for the writing of history--takes on a particular form when, as in the Pacific Islands, the nature of social change involves the decolonization process. Much has been written about the effects of colonization on both the conception of the past forced upon the colonized, and the way the past has been studied.[27] Colonial administrators, epitomizing Victorian attitudes, not only believed that they were the sole agents of historical change, but thought that they possessed a background of theoretical knowledge permitting them to understand better even than the people themselves the nature of the societies they administered. Such opinions formed the basis for policy formation and then became supported by the authority of the law. The views of the colonized were devalued, their society--and the beliefs about the past that defined it and gave it meaning--treated with patronizing condescension if not outright contempt and set into a social and intellectual straitjacket. After independence, the reviving of culture and the redefining of identity by means of reemphasizing the continuity backwards from the present, through the colonial period to traditional times, became a matter of pressing concern.[28]

Within this context, Davidson's theoretical contribution may be seen as a crucial first step, but no more than that. Ahead of his time to begin with, and concerned like few others of his generation to understand the Pacific Islander reality, his later work evidenced that he had moved beyond his own initial precepts.[29] But because he was less interested in the theoretical aspects of his discipline than in its practice, he did not found a school of history.[30] There has thus been a failure to accommodate study to the changed circumstances of the post-independence era. There has further been a comparative failure to involve Pacific Islanders by giving them the training and then the opportunity to write the history they would like to write. For non-Islander students, it is still

less than obligatory that they learn a Pacific language in order to study Pacific history. This is to a degree ironical, given that Davidson devoted a great part of his time as professor to assisting island nations in the transition to independence, and given also that he would have accepted the view of Pacific Islanders as to what Pacific history ought to be. For them, Pacific history must have as its central concern, as its major objective, the penetration of the past of Pacific Islanders, with the object of making that past accessible to the present.

This means not only that the Islands must constitute the environment but that Islanders must be the main actors. The history must not only be Island-centered but Islander-oriented. It must also be a history of all the people, not merely a narrow section of them. The actions of Europeans will figure, and figure with decisive effect, but theirs will be the actions of outsiders, powerful maybe, but rarely other than a tiny minority. Study will be pursued using all the tools of the contemporary discipline, and may be carried out by anyone with the inclination. "Decolonized" historians will be recognized by an attitude of mind, not a color of skin, and "decolonized" history by an orientation with respect to human action, not locale. This means that non-Pacific Islanders are not prevented by definition from writing Pacific history any more than Englishmen are prevented from writing French history. There is nothing mysterious about penetrating the past of Pacific Islanders as compared with the past of anyone else. The endeavor, on the contrary, rests on a firm conviction of the oneness of mankind, and therefore of its history, and on a recognition that the methodology relative to scientific inquiry into the whole of the human past is of universal application.

This implies three things of great importance for the immediate future of Pacific history. First, Pacific historians who wish to maintain a unity and coherence in their specialty, must study the past of entire societies, and not merely multicultural situations that formed only a part of the actions of those societies. Secondly, they must study process, and not merely sequences of events. And thirdly, they must emphasize social categories rather than individuals, even if such a category can only be defined through an accumulation of detail about individuals. I do not say that none of this has been done before, though when entire social categories have been studied they have usually been of outsider origin. What I do say is that the Islander past, studied as I have suggested, has not been recognized as the central concern, in the words of Spate, "the foundational part of the structure." Moynagh has thus seen nothing inappropriate in calling his excellent study of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company "a history of the Fiji sugar industry," even

though it effectively ignores the society of the Indians who grow the sugar and the Fijians upon whose land it is grown.

If my discussion so far seems to lean toward the tenets of what is sometimes called social history, that is my intention. Social history has been practiced longer than Pacific history as a discipline has existed in the minds of its exponents. It emerged from the clash and contact of the social sciences, which since the 1920s have each tried to demarcate clearly their areas of particular competence. At first sight, it appears a little curious that in spite of the continual assertion of the need for interdisciplinary cooperation, the idea of social history has not been explicitly proposed in the Pacific context. But on second thought, this may not be so strange after all. Social history originated within the French academic tradition, finding its greatest masters in the Annales school founded by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. Pacific history, on the other hand, has been dominated by the English--one might have said the Antipodean--academic tradition. Social historians, moreover, do not so much engage in avowals of the desirability for interdisciplinary cooperation as attempt the whole task themselves, recognizing that history by committee is rarely satisfactory.

The Annales school addresses itself to the long perspective in history. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, in *The Peasants of Languedoc*, for example, "endeavoured . . . to observe at various levels, the long-term movements of an economy and a society--base and superstructure, material life and cultural life, sociological evolution and collective psychology . . . a great agrarian cycle, lasting from the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth. . . ."[31] This is the *longue durée*, the long span of history, to use the phrase made current by Fernand Braudel, another eminent "annalist."[32] The concern is with the persistent patterns of the long term, with the quantitative and the structural, with what is recurrent, or at least comparable, in the process of history. The somewhat disparaging term *histoire événementielle* "history of mere events," is used for the traditional orientation toward a surface history of the actions of great personalities.

The *longue durée* may not exist in a manner amenable to study by the Pacific historian, but the attitude toward historical process it represents is worthy of serious consideration nonetheless. The span may be short, as compared with that available to Le Roy Ladurie in his studies of southern France,[33] but it is long enough for the persistence of structures to be detected and analyzed. Young has already suggested that the arbitrary starting points of a Pacific history oriented toward the colonial experience must be rejected, to be replaced by a culturally continuous

history with respect to the people themselves.[34] Beginning at the beginning, and including as much as possible of the pre-European, such a history would place the colonial episode in a wider perspective, rejecting the periodization of an alien point of view. Above all, it would be the history of an entire social order as it existed through time, and not merely of those multicultural situations involving the impingement of outsiders, or of a narrow elite.

This does not mean that the seeking of detailed knowledge of events should be abandoned. Quite the contrary, However, analysis should be organized with the purpose of revealing the way in which chance elements *("éléments aléatoires," "conjonctures")* influence underlying structures. Le Roy Ladurie, in his discussion of the Chouan Uprising for example, pointed out how the minute analysis of key events may reveal the nature of transition from one structure to another.[35] The battle of Kaba, 7 April 1855, was an event of similar import in the history of Fiji, marking the transition from a genuinely indigenous polity to one defined by Europeans. Kaba brought to an end a period in which the great chiefs, using the traditional methods of war and the exploitation of *vasu* privileges, struggled for hegemony over the Koro Sea and its surrounding territories. Cakobau, Vūnivalu of Bau, came closest to success, but during the twenty years preceding Kaba when he was effective ruler of the chiefdom, he was never able to consolidate his power.[36] The reasons for this lay in the underlying social structure, particularly in the relationship between predominant cleavages in society and the resources that leaders were able to command as a result. Such a study requires the knowledge of Fijian society and its oral traditions usually considered the purview of the anthropologist, but, in addition, the historian's technique of assessment by comparison and a recognition that traditions change as the structure of society changes through the long perspective.

The same relationship between surface events and the underlying social structure is to be observed in the processes by which a number of more purely Polynesian polities experienced a trend toward a monolithic character in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. John Garrett recently wrote that the missionaries were king-makers in the Pacific, with the future kings acting as patrons of the missionaries and the missionaries depending on them for ultimate success.[37] This was to separate out one element of a more complex and more essentially Pacific situation. The political implications of the Wesleyans' relationship with Tāufa'āhau in Tonga, for example, effectively prevented their seeking a similar role in Fiji, but this was a chance element in the situa-

tion in 1855. Thus, if its role in the long process of Fijian history is to be understood, it must be related to the underlying structure of strongly defined clan or tribal entities, held together by ties of kinship and clearly associated with certain localities, which, in the final analysis, were not amenable to unification.[38]

Whole societies, then, must be studied, and studied, moreover, according to the worldview of the people themselves. Much that is misleading, particularly with reference to such "exotic" manifestations as cargo cults and fertility rites, has been written by students approaching their task from within an inappropriate epistemological context. As Dening put it, with respect to circumcision, the anthropologist's definition of a "boundary-maintaining mechanism" is meaningless to a young man wishing only to avoid derogatory comments from potential sex partners.[39]

The approach entails the exhaustive study of social groups both in terms of structure and process, and of internal and external relationships. The techniques of quantitative analysis, and the systematic exploitation of oral evidence are of great importance, as three recent studies show. All are based on an exhaustive study of the social group concerned. That each was composed of immigrants rather than an indigenous population no doubt facilitated this, but the advantages to the results are striking and worth striving for in other, perhaps less tractable, contexts.

Malama Meleiseā's study of Melanesian plantation laborers left behind in Samoa after repatriation ceased in 1921, deals with a very small group indeed.[40] By the mid-1970s only six men survived, two of whom were too old and ill to be interviewed. The study thus consists of four brief biographies and a concluding chapter placing them in a wider sociohistorical context. Although the conclusions are congruent with those of Corris for the labor traffic in the Pacific, and of Firth for plantation conditions in Samoa during the German period, they have the distinction of being based on first-hand collection, and thus have an authority greater than the small number of informants might suggest. It can reasonably be inferred, moreover, that the recollections are broadly reflective of the conditions and way of life in general of Melanesian laborers in Samoa. One aspect of the all-too-brief study that begs for more extensive treatment concerns the way of life of the Melanesians' descendants. With respect to the government-owned Mulifanua plantation, for example, Meleiseā states that 43 descendants of 13 unrepatriated laborers still work there, and that the daughter of one of his informants could name no fewer than 262 such descendants in all.[41] A

sense of community clearly persists, and further study would obviously be worthwhile.

Whereas Meleiseā's study would have benefited from being conducted fifty years previously, when all the 150-odd unrepatriated laborers were still alive and available for interview, Brij Lal's study of the 45,439 Indian laborers who passed through the Calcutta depot on their way to Fiji[42] would have been impossible before the computer, The study rests on the evidence derived from analysis of the personal and social data contained on the emigration passes. These were available for every individual processed through Calcutta, and include such details as name, caste, father's name, districts of origin and registration, depot number, and ship number. Lal, however, did not stop at quantitative analysis of the structural aspects of his study. Believing that "quantitative" and "humanist" history form a complement rather than a dichotomy,[43] he sought information in folksongs and oral testimony about such things as motivation for emigration. The result reveals, to use his own words, "the structural dynamics of indentured emigration."[44] His conclusions authoritatively demolish a number of persistent misconceptions concerning indentured labor in Fiji. And because they are based on massed details pertaining to actual individuals, they may, like those of Meleiseā, be taken to be at least broadly true of the entire social category--that is, of all indentured laborers to have passed through Calcutta, without regard for destination.

Clive Moore's history of the Melanesian community in the northern Queensland town of Mackay[45] relies less on quantitative analysis than Lal's study, and more on the collection and examination of oral testimony; but its findings, too, have the authority of being based on accumulated individual details. Data from the twenty-four surviving accounts of entire voyages were used, together with that from Corris's interviews with twelve exindentured laborers recorded in the late 1960s. In addition, 132 biographies, collected from kinsfolk in the 1970s, are presented, and the oral testimony is backed by computerized re-sorting of baptism, marriage, and death records. The study falls into a number of sections: an ethnography of the Malaitan context and a description of the recruiting process; the European context into which the Kanaka Maratta (laborers from Malaita) were placed; the working and private lives of the laborers; their community in the twentieth century, including such matters as self-perception and the role of the kidnapping myth in conditioning the outlook of the people. Of the three studies discussed, it is perhaps the one that comes closest to what the French would call "total history," largely because it deals with a whole

society rather than with a particular section. All, however, contain useful object lessons for historians concerned to write about the past of Pacific Islanders.

This paper has examined the application of a potentially negative fragmentation in the study of Pacific history. European historians overemphasize the essential place of the study of European activity, and condescend somewhat toward the capabilities of Islander historians. The latter, in turn, assert the increasing irrelevance of the European orientation of Pacific history writing. I have argued that Pacific history, the past actions of the people of the Pacific Islands, is not only Island-centered but Islander-oriented. History writing must be based on this, by definition, but once accepted, such writing may be accomplished by anyone equipped with the techniques, and of an inclination to do so. It may acknowledge the value of studies of only part of the process by "building them in," In the final analysis, however, the Pacific historian will study the past of entire societies. The main concern will be the persistence or the change of structures through time, not merely those multicultural contexts involving Europeans. The main concern will be process rather than the surface sequence of events, Social categories will be emphasized rather than individuals, even if the way to an understanding of the category is through an accumulation of individual details.

I have suggested that there is much to be learned from the French school of total history, and that traditional documentary research must be complemented with quantitative analysis and the systematic use of oral testimony. In this way the qualms of those preoccupied with absolute chronology may be eliminated and the misgivings of those concerned about hard and fast lines between myth and history lessened (the more technically advanced work, in this respect, of our colleagues dealing with the African context is beginning to become more widely known).[46]

A final point concerns the use of theory. Howe acknowleged the general reluctance of historians to theorize, but suggested that more use of the theory of social scientists was all that was necessary. Eric Hobsbawm, on the contrary, demanded that historians construct new models for themselves, rather than borrow "the meagre available models from other sciences."[47] He encouraged historians "to watch what we are doing, to generalize it, and to correct it in the light of the problems arising out of further practice."[48]

It may be that I have suggested no more than that all available techniques and resources should be used in an integrated fashion and that

the special insights of Islander and non-Islander alike should be combined together rather than opposed to one another. Howe took the title of his recent book from Davidson's comparison of European penetration of the Pacific Islands with waves breaking on the shore without reaching the heartlands which are the cultures of the people.[49] I am suggesting that the point of view must now be of those who watch from the heartlands as the waves fall, rather than of those who come with the waves. In this way I am confident that the potentially destructive fragmentation presently threatening may be avoided.

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NOTES

1. J. W. Davidson, *The Study of Pacific History: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Canberra on 25 November 1954* (Canberra, 1955). The lecture was reprinted as "Problems of Pacific History," *Journal of Pacific History* 1 (1966): 5-21, from which references are taken.

2. J. W. Davidson, "History, Art or Game? A Comment on 'The Purity of Historical Method,' " *New Zealand Journal of History* 5, no. 2 (1971): 117.

3. Steve Britton, review of *Brown or White? A History of the Fiji Sugar Industry, 1878-1973* by Michael Moynagh, *New Zealand Journal of History* 16, no. 1(1978): 78-79.

4. Davidson, "Problems of Pacific History," 5.

5. Ibid., 8, 18.

6. Ibid., 21.

7. Davidson commented on these early studies in footnotes to the 1966 version of his inaugural lecture.

8. J. W. R. Smail, "On The Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2, no. 12 (1961): 72-102; also William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (New Haven, 1967), and Emily Sadka, *The Protected Malay States, 1874-1895* (Kuala Lumpur, 1968).

9. Peter Munz, "The Purity of Historical Method: Some Sceptical Reflections on the Current Enthusiasm for the History of Non-European Societies," *New Zealand Journal of History* 5, no. 1 (1971): 2, 17.

10. Davidson, "Art or Game," 116-117.

11. H. E. Maude, "Beachcombers and Castaways," in *Of Islands and Men: Studies in Pacific History* (Melbourne, 1968), and *The Evolution of the Gilbertese Boti: An Ethnohistorical Interpretation* (Wellington, 1963).

12. R. W. Firth, *History and Traditions of Tikopia* (Wellington, 1961).

13. Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880* (Melbourne, 1980).

14. O. H. K. Spate, "The Pacific as an Artefact," in Niel Gunson, ed., *The Changing Pacific: Essays in Honour of H. E. Maude* (Melbourne, 1978), 42-43.

15. Noel Rutherford, review of *Church and State in Tonga: The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries and Political Deuelopment, 1822-1875* by Sione Lātūkefu, *Historical Studies* 17, no. 66 (1976): 111; K. R. Howe, "The Fate of the 'Savage' in Pacific Historiography," *New Zealand Journal of History* 11, no. 2 (1977): 152-154.

16. See, for example, "Pacific Personality. Samoa's Albert Wendt: Poet and Author, Interviewed by Marjorie Crocombe," *Mana Annual of Creative Writing* (Suva, 1973), 46; David Routledge, "Decolonizing Pacific History:' address to the Fiji Society, 30 October 1979, *Proceedings of the Fiji Society,* 1979.

17. K. R. Howe, "Pacific Islands History in the 1980s: New Directions or Monograph Myopia?" *Pacific Studies* 3, no. 1 (1979): 84.

18. J. M. R. Young in the *National Times,* 8 September 1979. See also my review of *The Changing Pacific: Essays in Honour of H. E. Maude,* another Canberra collection of essays, *Journal of Pacific Studies* 4 (1979): 84-94.

19. O. H. K. Spate, *The Pacific since Magellan,* vol. 1, *The Spanish Lake* (Canberra, 1979), ix.

20. Spate, "The Pacific as an Artefact," 43.

21. Howe, "Pacific Islands History in the 1980s: 88.

22. K. R. Howe, *Where the Waves Fall: A New South Sea Islands History from First Settlement to Colonial Rule* (Sydney, 1984).

23. Ibid., xiv.

24. See H. E. Maude, "Pacific History--Past, Present and Future" *(Journal of Pacific History* 6 [1971]: 3-24, an article based substantially on the author's presidential address to the History Section of "the first meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the advancement of Science to be held in the Pacific Islands"), 3; D. J. N. Denoon, "People's History," *Inaugural Lecture, University of Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby, 1973).

25. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London, 1961) particularly Lecture 1.

26. Sir George Clark, "General Introduction: History and the Historian," *New Cambridge Modern History,* vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1957), xx-xxi.

27. For a general treatment, see David C. Gordon, *Self-determination and History in the Third World* (Princeton, 1971); for a Pacific example, see Peter France, *The Charter of the Land: Custom and Colonization in Fiji* (Melbourne, 1969).

28. Denoon, "People's History"; Maude, "Pacific History--Past, Present and Future," 23 (referring to the South Pacific Commission's refusal to set up a committee of Pacific historians).

29. See, in particular, Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa: The Emergence of the Independent State of Western Samoa* (Melbourne, 1967), a brilliant exercise in participant history, in which the author remained conscious of his status as an outsider and the need to observe the actions of which he was part with academic detachment; and his portrait of Lauaki Mamoe, one of the most important political chiefs in late nineteenth-century Samoa, "Lauaki Namulau'ulu Mamoe: A Traditionalist in Samoan Politics," in J. W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr, eds., *Pacific Island Portraits* (Canberra, 1973) 267-299.

30. See the obituary of J. W. Davidson by Francis West, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 2, no. 1 (1973): 117.

31. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc* (trans. John Day, Illini Books edition, Chicago, 1976), 284.

32. Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée,"* in *On History* (trans. Sarah Matthews, Chicago, 1980), 25-54.

33. In addition to *The Peasants of Languedoc,* see *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error* (trans., Barbara Bray, New York, 1975).

34. J. M. R. Young, *National Times,* 8 September 1979.

35. E. Le Roy Ladurie, "The 'Event' and the 'Long Term' in Social History: The Case of the Chouan Uprising," in *The Territory of the Historian* (trans. Ben and Sian Reynolds, Chicago, 1979), 130.

36. David Routledge, "Religion and Politics in Oceania, 1780-1850," *Jernal Sejarah, Universiti Malaya* 11 (1972-1973): 69-81, and "The Failure of Cakobau, Chief of Bau, to Become King of Fiji," in G. A. Wood and P. S. O'Connor, eds., *W. P. Morrell: A Tribute, Essays in Modern and Early Modern History Presented to William Parker Morrell, Professor Emeritus, University of Otago* (Dunedin, 1973), 125-139.

37. John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Suva, 1982), 6.

38. I have nearly completed a comparative analysis of these processes, working along the lines indicated.

39. Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880* (Melbourne, 1980), 40-41.

40. Malama **Meleiseā,** *O Tama Uli: Melanesians in Samoa* (Suva, 1980); see also the review by Doug Munro, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 91, no. 4 (1982): 631-636.

41. **Meleiseā,** *O Tama Uli,* 54.

42. Brij Lal, "Leaves of the Banyan Tree: Origins and Background of Fiji's North Indian Indentured Migrants, 1879-1916," Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1980.

43. Ibid., 343.

44. Ibid., 22.

45. C. R. Moore, "Kanaka Maratta: A History of Melanesian Mackay," Ph.D. thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1981.

46. See, for example, P. Pender-Cudlip, "Oral Traditions and Anthropological Analysis: Some Contemporary Myths." *Azania* 7, no. 1 (1972): 2-24; P. Stevens, Jr., "The Uses of

Oral Traditions in the Writing of African History," *Tarikh* 6, no. 1 (1978): 21-30; T. Spear, "Oral Traditions: Whose History?" *Journal of Pacific History* 16 (1981): 133-148.

47. E. J. Hobsbawm, "From Social History to the History of Society," in Felix Gilbert and Stephen R. Graubard, eds., *Historical Studies Today* (New York, 1973), 8.

48. Ibid., 13.

49. Howe, *Where the Waves Fall,* 352.