"A FOREIGN FLOWER"? DEMOCRACY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

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Moves towards democracy took place in three South Pacific countries in the early 1990s: Fiji held its first elections since the military coups in 1987; Western Samoa extended the franchise from chiefly heads of household *(matai)* to all adults (Tagaloa 1992:131); and a pro-democracy movement was formed in Tonga (Helu 1992:145-149). These moves were resisted. Some people opposed democracy on principle. A leader of Fiji's indigenous nationalist Taukei movement, for example, referred to democracy as "that crazy demon" (quoted in Sutherland 1992:192). Others complained about the way it was introduced or, like the king of Tonga, warned of its consequences "citing the histories of Spain, Germany, and Russia as examples of ruthless tyrannies that had democratic origins, and warning of the dangers of coups d'etat" (Campbell 1992a:92).

Persistent arguments, for and against, concerned the social and economic conditions for democracy. A *Fiji Times* editorial asked if democracy was a "foreign flower" unable to take root in South Pacific soil (3 September 1992). That phrase captures two themes in debates about democracy in the region: The first is the extent to which democracy is something introduced from outside rather than grown from within, and the second is the extent to which democracy is possible or desirable in certain economic and social circumstances but not in others.

This article tries to answer the first of these questions by making comparisons among the twenty-two island states and territories of the South Pacific. Though the evidence is patchy, the number and variety of polit-

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ical systems in the South Pacific provides opportunities to use comparison as a control on generalizations about democracy derived from only one country, or from elsewhere.[1]

I first consider what democracy means, in particular the relevance of republican and nationalist conceptions of democracy, the distinction between direct and representative democracy, and the vexed relationship between liberalism, democracy, and indigenous cultural traditions. Second, I compare the South Pacific countries in terms of the attributes of representative democracy: responsible executive, universal suffrage, and freedom of speech. Third, I use these data to consider some hypotheses from other studies of the relationship between democracy and development, particularly the role of the middle or working classes in proposing it and the role of chiefs and plantation owners in resisting it.

What Is Democracy?

Comparison requires conceptualization--stepping back and viewing particular institutions as cases of something more abstract.[2] "Democracy" is a contested concept. Most regimes claim to be in some way "democratic" and the concept may be overstretched to fit quite different systems of government (Sartori 1991:249). The meaning of concepts depends partly on their relationship to the world outside and partly on their relationship to other concepts. At least five issues seem to be at stake in current debates about democracy in the region and are discussed further below:

1. The relevance of monarchical and nationalist conceptions of democracy
2. The conflict between egalitarian principles and hierarchical indigenous traditions
3. A conflict between representative and direct democracy
4. The feasibility of democracy in multiethnic societies
5. The conflict between liberalism and indigenous culture

Republican and Nationalist Conceptions

Republican conceptions of democracy contrast it with monarchy and aristocracy. Nationalist conceptions contrast democracy with foreign rule. In his *Models **of** Democracy*, David Held offers a republican definition of democracy as "a form of government in which, in contradistinction to monarchies and aristocracies, the people rule" (1987:2).

Held raises questions of definition (which people, ruling what, and within what limits?) and of application (in what circumstances is democracy possible?). In the South Pacific, the questions of definition were considered in debates that led to the adoption of constitutions when islands became independent or entered into free association with former colonial powers (Ghai 1983, 1988a, 1988b). Questions of application were sometimes regarded as vaguely demeaning of Pacific Islanders, but in any case tended to be set aside in the urgent business of drawing up a constitution. They were raised again when, as in Fiji, the constitutional arrangements broke down.

In Fiji, Tonga, and Western Samoa--whose democratization introduced this essay--the republican conception of democracy makes sense. The king, the nobles, and their opponents contrast democracy with monarchy or aristocracy. The Tongan social critic, Helu, comfortably discusses Tongan politics in terms of classical and modern European republicanism (1992), while a conservative Western Samoan writer warns of the "threat of monarchy" (Tagaloa 1992:124). Elsewhere, democracy is more often contrasted with colonial rule or the precontact forms of government, which ranged from egalitarian "stateless societies" to more-stratified systems of chieftaincy that sometimes became aristocracies and monarchies (Larmour 1992b). In Papua New Guinea and other parts of Melanesia, for example, colonial rule is often seen as having extinguished precontact forms of direct democracy that independence has only partly restored (Deklin 1992:36-39).

A nationalist conception might provide an alternative to the republican.[3] It made sense in late-colonial-period Vanuatu, for example, where a mass-based political party (the Vanuaʻaku Pati) opposed British and French colonial rule, and a general election was not held until just before independence. But colonial rule was also resisted by quite undemocratic movements. One of the strands in Western Samoa's Mau movement in the 1920s, for instance, was the restoration of chiefly, rather than popular, authority against colonial paternalism (Meleisea 1987: 126-128).

Colonial powers introduced forms of representative government, at times only to retreat in the face of them. There was also popular resistance to the forms of democracy proposed by late-colonial-period governments or adopted at independence. Indigenous resistance to the introduction of "multiracial" local government councils in Papua New Guinea in the late 1960s precipitated a violent and sustained threat to Australian rule in the territory (Downs 1980:424-437). Voters in the Marshall Islands and Palau resisted joining the Federated States of

Micronesia (Hanlon and Eperiam 1983:87-88). Postcolonial constitutional reviews have found popular resistance to human rights provisions, such as those guaranteeing freedom of movement.[4]

A nationalist conception of democracy also has difficulty making sense of votes against independence (or can only do so by dismissing voters against independence as nonindigenous or misled). Majorities of voters in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have voted for closer integration with, rather than independence from, the United States (Ranney and Pennyman 1985). Majorities in the French territories have voted for continued rule by France. Supporters of independence in New Caledonia blame immigration, claiming that the will of the majority of the indigenous people has been opposed, outnumbered by a minority abetted by settlers and recent immigrants (Henningham 1992). The 1988 Matignon Accords between supporters of independence and the French government brought peace to the territory precisely by deferring another referendum on independence for ten years: Democracy seemed to be part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Egalitarian Democracy and Hierarchical Traditions

There is a common vocabulary of politics among Polynesian societies based, according to Kirch, on "genealogical rank, primogeniture, *mana*[5] and *tapu6*" (1989:28). Chiefly traditions are often cited by those hostile to democratization in Fiji, Western Samoa, and Tonga. Conflicts between chiefly rule and democracy also occur in parts of Micronesia, such as the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia, and in those parts of Melanesia with chiefly traditions. There is a general revival, or reinvention, of chieftaincy in the region (White 1992).

However, traditions do not necessarily speak with one voice. Traditions of authority also produce traditions of resistance and justified rebellion, as in the famous Polynesian saying about chiefs who tended to "eat the powers of the government too much" (Sahlins, quoted in Kirch 1989:254). The attitudes of Fijian commoners to chieftaincy well express this ambivalent attitude: supporting chieftaincy but cynical about the actual practices of particular chiefs. Sitiveni Rabuka--the leader of the 1987 coups, loyal rebel, commoner leader of the chiefs' party, and now prime minister--perfectly embodies this ambivalence. Traditions are thus "polysemic," with multiple potential meanings.

Scott argues from his own research on peasants and a wide range of historical accounts of slavery that subordinated groups do not necessar-

ily accept the self-justifications of their rulers, but simply keep prudently quiet (1990:70-107). The historical record reflects what he calls the "public transcript" (for example, "our serfs love us") (Scott 1990:45-46). Typically, however, neither side really believes it: Members of the dominant group are mindful of the need to preserve their prestige, solidarity, and means of repression. The subordinated (commoners, women, the colonized, etc.) play along, make subversive jokes, and dream of a "world turned upside down." This world is partly glimpsed during carnivals and Mardi Gras, or (for instance) in the run-up to Fiji's second coup, when the army escorted escaped prisoners through the streets of the capital to have tea with the governor-general (Scarr 1988: 127).

Representative and Direct Democracy

The constitutions introduced at independence or as part of political-status negotiations with the United States were quite different from each other, but all were based on representative forms of government. As Held (1992) argues, representative democracy is an invention of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only consolidated since the Second World War, and apparently triumphant since the collapse of communist-party forms of democracy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Representative democracy is distinct from the participatory but socially exclusive forms of self-government celebrated in the Greek city-states, which disenfranchised women, foreigners, and slaves. Proponents argue that representation made democracy feasible for much-larger political systems while protecting citizens from the excesses of mob rule on the one hand and of state officials on the other (Held 1992: 12-17).

The median population of a modern South Pacific state is about fifty thousand, roughly the citizen population of the Greek city-states that provide Western political theory with its images of participatory democracy. Precontact political systems were typically much smaller and in some cases as socially exclusive. Participatory democracy thus seems feasible on demographic grounds, and there are many examples of representative democracy conceding to participatory democracy in modern South Pacific constitutional systems. Turnout of voters and turnover of representatives is generally very high (Ghai 1988c:71). Traditions of village-level self-government persisted through colonial rule, often encouraged through the introduction of systems of local government that were then entrenched in the Melanesian constitutions at independence. Pressures to devolve power to local assemblies, towards more federal

arrangements, and to create new states within existing federations have persisted.

The international supervision of the process of decolonization also supported direct democracy. The United Nations encouraged referenda and public-education campaigns in which politicians and officials toured islands and villages. Series of referenda were held, particularly in the U.S. and French territories (but also in the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands). Committees toured hundreds of villages in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to find out what kinds of constitution, land policy, or provincial government the people wanted (Papua New Guinea 1973, 1974; Solomon Islands 1976a, 1976b, 1979). Subsequent constitutional reviews have tended to follow the same pattern.

Democracy and Ethnic Divisions

Fiji's 1987 coups support Lane and Ersson's evidence of a negative correlation between ethnic diversity and democratic persistence (1990: 138). The politics of Fiji are constructed around deeply entrenched categories of "race," reinforced by the 1990 constitution that reserves certain executive positions for indigenous Fijians and insures an indigenous majority in Parliament, whatever the population. Politics in New Caledonia are similarly polarized, though without Fiji's formal constitutional entrenchments. Similar issues of ethnicity, authenticity, and immigration during the colonial period are arising in Guam.

More generally, throughout the region differential access to economic opportunities is often marked by ethnic difference, and each reinforces the other. For example, people living around colonial capitals like Tarawa, Port Moresby, or Honiara got early access to education and public service jobs but now face competition from migrants from other parts of the country. Their earlier privilege and current fears about its loss are often expressed in terms of ethnicity or of customary land rights defined in ethnic terms of descent from common ancestors. Tensions between the customary owners of the land on which Port Vila is built and migrants from other parts of the country contributed to a land rights demonstration and subsequent attempt by the president to sack the government in Vanuatu in 1988 (Larmour 1990). Part of Bougainville landowners' complaint against the Bougainville copper mine is its attraction for migrant workers from other parts of the country and overseas (Larmour 1992a). Fiji is thus an extreme case of a more pervasive phenomenon.

Liberalism and Indigenous Culture

From the Enlightenment's "noble savage" to the Air Niugini advertising slogan "Like Every Place You've Never Been," the South Pacific has been subject to what Said (1985) famously characterized as an "orientalising" process that simplifies, caricatures, and emphasizes the exotic.[7] Keesing warns against the reification of Pacific cultures as fixed, unequivocal, and standing outside politics (1992:32-35). Theorists of the "invention of tradition" have shown that institutions claimed to be venerable are really quite recent or indeed products of colonial sponsorship.[8] However, in spite of these welcome corrections, there remains a persistent modern tension between "culture" and "democracy" that needs explaining (Crocombe et al. 1992).

Saffu's pioneering survey of political attitudes in Papua New Guinea demonstrates some of the issues. He found that 39 percent of people did not regard casting their votes in elections as an individual matter, and most of these voted according to the recommendation of a community meeting, clan head, councillor, or church leader (Saffu 1989:21). To avoid "orientalising" we would need to ask, for comparison, how people in "the West" voted, and we might find differences within "the West": (say) that people voted like their parents or on the instructions of a party machine. Theorists of the invention of tradition would remind us that at least two of Saffu's institutional reference points are "introduced" (councillor, church leader) and might cast doubt on the traditional credentials of a community meeting and clan head. Nevertheless, some deliberately collective process seems to be going on that is at odds with the assumptions, at least, of liberal democracy.

Parekh (1992) suggests we might start looking for an explanation by distinguishing "liberalism" from "democracy." Though not specifically addressed to the South Pacific, his argument also suggests a way of drawing together the issues of tradition, ethnicity, and direct democracy discussed above.

Briefly, Parekh argues that in the modern history of the West, "liberalism preceded democracy by nearly two centuries and created a world to which the latter had to adjust" (1992: 161). Liberalism involves a conception of the autonomous individual, able to stand outside a particular community and to create or reject institutions on the basis of calculations of self-interest. Individuals are conceptually prior to governments, and democracy is one way that individual liberty can be protected against governments. This conception, suggests Parekh, is quite differ-

ent from the assumptions underlying Athenian democracy, in which the community is conceptually prior to the individual and individual freedom lies in active participation in government, rather than in a private space protected from it. This is not to say that liberal democracy is defective, merely that its own history shows it is not necessarily universally valid.

Parekh goes on to suggest that liberalism may be of limited relevance in "cohesive polities with a strong sense of community and multicultural polities" (1992: 169). In the first case (for example, certain Islamic societies), there may be a different conceptualization of the relationship between individuals and community. In the second case (for example, India), a plurality of ethnic, tribal, or religious communities may themselves be bearers of rights, with different laws governing the members of each. In rejecting the universalist claims of liberal democracy, Parekh is not arguing for complete relativism; instead he proposes the development of cross-cultural consensus about principles of good government that allow diverse, culturally specific interpretation while mobilizing domestic and international pressure against "grossly outrageous practices and customs" (1992: 171).

Such a consensus may be hard to achieve, but Parekh's insistence that liberalism can be rejected without rejecting other forms of democracy goes some way to explain the tensions surrounding democracy in the South Pacific, particularly as his argument could apply equally to cohesive monocultures such as Kiribati, multicultural polities such as Fiji, and states such as Papua New Guinea that share characteristics of both. It allows for criticism of particular regimes on several grounds: that they are selectively interpreting tradition; that the societies they govern are not, in fact, the cohesive communities their rulers claim them to be, so they should allow for the rights of minority communities or general individual rights; and that, whatever values the community holds, these violate emerging international norms. All three arguments, for example, could be made against postcoup regimes in Fiji.

Representative Democracy in the South Pacific

Representative forms of democracy are fairly well established in the South Pacific, even in countries that are still colonies. All but two now have a system of universal adult suffrage (the exceptions having populations of only sixteen hundred and one hundred). Sixteen of the twenty-two have an executive responsible to a legislature within the jurisdiction rather than to a metropolitan capital. However, Tonga's executive is still

responsible to the king rather than parliament, and Fiji's inclusion within the above total is debatable: Its system of representation is ethnically biased, and the responsibility of the executive to the legislature is compromised by the reservation of key positions to one ethnic group. The media in most countries have a narrow geographical spread and tend to be dominated by the executive.

Table 1 compares twenty-two island members of the South Pacific Commission for indicators of the conventional attributes of representative democracy: an executive responsible to an elected legislature or directly elected, universal adult suffrage, and freedom of speech. The "Suffrage" column deals with the right to vote and shows when the franchise was extended to particular groups. However, the right to vote is not of much use if the legislature has no power over the executive. Colonial governments often created advisory councils and assemblies but remained responsible themselves to metropolitan ministers and parliaments. Even when territories became "self-governing," with local officials responsible to local electorates, the colonial governments retained responsibility for foreign affairs and defense. So the "Responsible Executive" column shows when the executive became fully responsible to a legislature in the jurisdiction or (through direct election of a president) to a local electorate.

Thus, the status of the executive links democracy with decolonization, and (with two exceptions) the date in that column is the date of independence or entry into free association. The exceptions are important. When the army seized power in Fiji in 1987, the executive was cut loose from the legislature (and officials went on to use the opportunity to implement potentially unpopular economic policies). Elections held under a new constitution in 1992 restored some accountability. Tonga has had a parliament since 1875, but the executive--the king and his ministers and governors--is not responsible to it, though reformers are trying to make the executive more accountable.

Divided responsibility between metropolitan and local legislatures and the direct election of members of the executive make the situation more complicated in the remaining French and U.S. colonies. Regulations governing the French "overseas territories" make a distinction between "state" functions (for which the high commissioner is responsible to Paris) and a more modest list of "territorial" functions, for which local officials are responsible to the Territorial Assembly. Voters in these territories also elect members to the National Assembly in Paris and vote for the French president (and even the European Parliament). A third tier of municipal government is responsible in different ways to both--

TABLE 1. Indicators of Representative Democracy

	Suffrage	Responsible Executive	Nongovernment Newspapers (1990s)	Nongovernment Radio & TV (1990s)
American Samoa	Universal 1957	1976	*Samoa News* *Observer*	TV
Cook Islands	Rarotonga universal 1893-1899 Universal 1957	1965	*Cook Islands News*	FM radio
Fed. States of Micronesia	Universal 1965a	1986	Joan *King Report*	TV
Fiji	European men 1906 Indian men 1929b Fijians 1963 Women 1963	1970-1987 (coups) Resumed 1992	*Fiji Times* *Daily Post* *Weekender*	FM radio
French Polynesia	Tahiti universal 1880-1903[c] Universal 1953	Paris	*Les Nouvelles* *Tahiti Pacifique* *Depeche* *La Tribune* *L'Echo de Tahiti Nui*	FM radio (11 stations)
Guam	1899 attempt Universal 1931	1971	*Daily News*	Radio, KUAM TV
Kiribati	Universal 1967	1979	*Itoi*	No
Marshall Islands	Universal 1965*	1986	*M. I. Journal*	Radio, TV

Nauru	Universal 1951	1968	Occasional	No
New Caledonia	European men pre-WW2 European women postwar Melanesians 1951,[d] completed 1957	Paris	*Les Nouvelles*	Radio Djiido Radio Rhythm Blue
Niue	Universal 1960	1974	No	TV
Northern Marianas	Universal 1965[a]	1975	*Marianas News and Views*	TV
Palau	Universal 1965[a]	1981	*Tia Belau*	WALU TV
Papua New Guinea	Europeans 1951 Universal 1964	1975	*Times* *Post-Courier* *The National* *Wantok*	EMTV
Pitcairn	(Direct democracy)	No	*Miscellany*	No
Solomon Islands	Universal 1967	1978	*Star* *Voice* *Toktok*	No
Tokelau	(Direct democracy)	No	No	No
Tonga	Nobles 1875 Men 1875 Women 1960e	King	*Times* *Tongan International* *Kele'a* *Matangi Tonga* *Taumu'a Lelei* *Ko'e Tohi Fanongonogo*	TV
Tuvalu	Universal 1967	1978	No	No

(continued)

TABLE 1. Continued

	Suffrage	Responsible Executive	Nongovernment Newspapers (1990s)	Nongovernment Radio & TV (1990s)
Vanuatu	Universal 1975[f]	1980	No	No
Wallis & Futuna	Universal 1961	Paris	No	No
Western Samoa	Europeans 1923 Matai 1948[g] Universal 1991	1962	Times Observer Samoa News	No

Sources: Robie 1990 and (American Samoa) Sunia 1983:124; (Cook Islands) Gilson 1980:68, 90, 200-201; Pryor 1983:160; (Fed. States of Micronesia) Meller 1969; (Fiji) Lawson 1991:83-85, 135-144, 164-165; (French Polynesia) Newbury 1980:206-212; (Guam) Thompson 1947:68-79; (Kiribati) Van Trease 1980:3; (Marshall Islands) Meller 1969; (Nauru) Viviani 1970:l05; (New Caledonia) Dornoy 1984:154; Henningham 1992:49; (Niue) Chapman 1976:16; (Northern Marianas, Palau) Meller 1969; (Papua New Guinea) Downs 1980:94-95, 306-310; (Solomon Islands) Seamala 1983:2-8; (Tokelau) Geise and Perez 1983; (Tonga) Campbell 1992b:186; (Tuvalu) Van Trease 1980:3; (Vanuatu, Wallis & Futuna) Henningham 1992:36-39, 180; (Western Samoa) Meleisea 1987: 126-127, 208-211.

[a]The date is the Trust Territory election, but district legislatures were evolving different forms and franchises during the 1950s; see table in Meller 1969: 176.

[b]The Indian members elected in 1929 then boycotted the Legislative Council over the issue of a common roll.

[c]See endnote 10.

[d]Some 1,500 Melanesian men got enfranchised in 1945. Electors also voted in metropolitan French elections.

[e]Women were granted the right to vote in 1951, but first voted in 1960.

[f]There were communal franchises (British, French, ni-Vanuatu) for an Advisory Council since 1957, but the ni-Vanuatu were indirectly elected from local councils. Twenty-nine of the seats to the first Representative Assembly were elected on universal suffrage in 1975, but there were also thirteen seats for "chiefs" and "economic interests" (Henningham 1992). The first general election with an undivided electorate was held in 1979.

[g]In 1900 the German governor, Solf, had apparently been pressing for ***matai*** to elect ***faipule*** (local officials) from among their members; see Meleisea 1987:59.

though reforms in the early 1980s reasserted control from Paris (Larmour 1985; Chivot 1985). Thus the "state" executive is responsible to a legislature, but one in France, to which all citizens in the overseas territories elect representatives. There, of course, they form a tiny minority of the national parliament, and the citizens who elect them include visiting soldiers, metropolitan officials, and migrant workers with few links to the territory (Danielsson 1983; Danielsson and Danielsson 1986).

Relations between the United States and its "commonwealth" (the Northern Marianas), "organized unincorporated territory" (Guam), and "unorganized and unincorporated territory" (American Samoa) are complex and contested, and the test of executive responsibility is hard to apply. Each has a popularly elected governor and local legislature, but they differ in forms and degrees of supervision by the executive and legislative branches in Washington. Guam and American Samoa also elect nonvoting delegates to the metropolitan legislature rather than voting members as in the French territories. The dates in the table for these three polities refer to the first elections of governors.

Palau's status was unresolved while the nuclear-free provisions of its 1981 constitution conflicted with U.S. military rights under the Compact of Free Association negotiated between the two governments. Seven referenda failed to approve the compact, but an eighth succeeded in November 1993, after the constitution was amended to require a simple majority rather than 75 percent approval (D. Schuster, pers. corn., 8 Dec. 1993).

The two right-hand columns of Table 1 try to capture an indication of a third aspect of democracy, freedom of speech. It is of little use to have an executive responsible to a legislature if neither legislators nor the electors know what is happening, can consider alternatives, or campaign for them to be adopted. An important kind of power is the power to define the agenda and simply exclude, rather than having to defeat, alternatives (Lukes 1974: 16-20). Freedom of speech and of association, for example, were sharply curtailed in Fiji after the coups, by both decree and bullying. The presence of nongovernment news media is simply one among a number of possible indicators. Tolerance of trades unions or antigovernment demonstrations would be others.

Privately owned media dependent on advertising, government licenses, and work permits may be more complacent than an official news service with statutory independence and crusading journalists (Robie 1990). Newspapers have limited penetration of scattered islands, sometimes with different languages and low levels of literacy. Nevertheless, nongovernment newspapers in Papua New Guinea (notably the

church-sponsored *Times),* Tonga's *Kele'a,* and the Solomon Islands *Star* have played such an important political role, particularly by exposing government corruption and incompetence, that the existence of non-government newspapers seems a reliable if only partial indicator of the presence of free speech and association. Compared to a flowering of such newspapers at independence, their absence in Vanuatu has certainly had a chilling effect on politics there.

Each of these characteristics of representative democracy may be present without the other. There may be universal suffrage electing people to an impotent parliament. There may be parliamentary government with little outside criticism or dissent. Or a bureaucratic regime may tolerate a high degree of free speech and association. Nevertheless, these characteristics are linked to the extent that the absence of one tends to weaken the others. Lane and Ersson find that although there are many indicators of democracy (competitive party politics, human rights, and so forth), they are so closely correlated in practice that "the concept of a democratic regime is empirically unambiguous" (1990: 133).

Several patterns, with some clusters and interesting deviant cases, can be seen in the data in Table 1. The extensions of the franchise show selection by race, gender, and rank (in Tonga and Western Samoa). Generally, the sequence was white men and chiefs, other men, and finally women (though the sources are often not precise on the latter).[9]

Tokelau (population sixteen hundred) and Pitcairn (one hundred) do not have formal systems of universal adult suffrage, though both are so small as to be in practical terms direct democracies. However, they also score a "no" for responsible executives, joined by Tonga (a monarchy), and Fiji (between the coups). My data on nongovernment news media are patchy, but twelve polities score an unequivocal "yes" on each of the conventional criteria for democracy, rising to fourteen if the larger French territories are included. The number rises to fifteen if Fiji is included despite the racial bias in its representation. Most of the others miss out because of the absence of nongovernment media, which could have more to do with problems of investment, distribution, and literacy than with the absence of freedom of speech it is supposed, for **our** purposes, to indicate.

The median date for a fully responsible executive is the late seventies, with the median date for universal suffrage more tightly bunched at 1965-1967. There are some interesting exceptions earlier and later. Western Samoa was the first to achieve a fully responsible legislature (1962), but the last to open it to universal suffrage (in 1991). Tonga was

the earliest to extend the franchise to adult men, though there were some brief attempts at nineteenth-century democracy in Guam (between Spanish and American rule), French Polynesia (Tahiti), and the Cook Islands (Rarotonga).[10] Two of the three French territories were relatively early in achieving universal suffrage (in the early 1950s). Vanuatu did not achieve universal suffrage until 1975, only five years before independence. As an Anglo-French condominium it lost both ways: missing out on the universal suffrage the French territories achieved in the 1950s and that of its British neighbors in the 1960s.

The Social Bases of Democracy

The information compiled in Table 1 indicates the current pattern of representative democracy in the region. But such information neither explains how this pattern was achieved nor predicts whether it will persist. The *Fiji Times* editorial that provided the title for this article argues that democracy is a "flower," rooted in particular social conditions and perhaps unable to flourish without them. Liberals have argued that a minimum level of property ownership or education is necessary for effective democracy, and restrictions on voting based on property, language, or education feature in early South Pacific electoral provisions. Marxists have argued that in societies riven by conflict between capital and labor, democracy must be a sham. The observer seeking to identify the social bases of democracy in the South Pacific faces several difficulties.

First, two distinct periods need explaining: the brief but restricted suffrage in the transition to colonial rule, and the steadier introduction of universal suffrage (typically in the sixties) and responsible government (typically in the seventies) (Table 1). This "second wave" of democracy was introduced in the late colonial period, so to understand its introduction we need to consider the social conditions for democracy in the metropole as well as the colony. For example, the fact that universal suffrage was introduced into the French colonies in the early 1950s and the British colonies in the 1960s had as much to do with different conditions in Britain and France, and in the international system, as with different conditions within their Pacific territories. We also need to take sequences, borrowing, lesson-drawing, and precedents into account. Support for the introduction of democracy may be distinct from support for its subsequent maintenance or resistance to its overthrow in quite different historical circumstances.

Second, several dimensions of social structure are likely to be relevant

to democracy: The suffrage categories in Table 1 suggest race, rank, and gender were regarded as important by those involved in extending or limiting the franchise. Class may "lie behind" these. In spite of a scaffolding of national censuses and a depth of anthropological research, the overall social structure of modern South Pacific societies is not very clear. Marxist accounts have had to back and fill in applying the classic categories (Fitzpatrick 1980; MacWilliam and Thompson 1992:5-8). Nor is there a necessary link between structure (if we knew it) and action. In Marxist language, a class "in itself' does not necessarily act as a class "for itself." Nor do nonclass categories of people necessarily act collectively.

Finally, the social conditions for democracy can be transformed by democracy, which thereby institutionalizes itself.

Recent comparative research by Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992) on democracy and development in the advanced capitalist countries, Latin America, Central America, and the Caribbean suggests factors that may also be relevant to the South Pacific. Their research has sought to reconcile two different findings. On the one hand, quantitative cross-national studies tend to show a correlation between development and democracy, without necessarily explaining why. On the other hand, qualitative comparative research tends to link the two in the particular conditions of early capitalism and is "far more pessimistic about today's developing countries" (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992:3).

Following Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1967), Rueschemeyer et al. start with landlords whose labor-repressive systems of agriculture make them hostile to democracy. They argue that the push for democracy tends to come from the new working classes, which need allies. Thus they disagree with those who see the middle classes as the bearers of democracy: The middle classes may jump either way, based in part on their perception of longer-term threats from the working class. Political parties play an important role in moderating perceived threats. Perceived class interests and allegiances are socially constructed, and what happens in one place may provide a model for others. Once a particular pattern is established, it may be hard to shift, so conditions for the establishment of democracy may be different from those for its maintenance.

Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens explain the correlation in terms of relative class power: Capitalist development tends to open up spaces for democracy and creates new classes to press for its realization. These democratic opportunities, however, are also determined by state

and interstate structures of power. History matters in the sense that the outcome depends on the sequence of the interaction. Existing patterns constrain future possibilities, but institutionalization takes time to achieve. Rueschemeyer et al.'s explanation of the statistical relationship between capitalist development and democracy thus depends on the sequencing of the interaction between three factors: the balance of class power, the power and autonomy of state, and transnational structures of power. These three factors, their interaction, and their sequencing will now provide a framework for considering the social bases of democracy in the South Pacific region.

Relative Class Power

In Rueschemeyer et al.'s analysis, "landlords stand at the opposite pole from the working class in their constitutional interests" (1992:60). Landlords resist giving up the power they held under "agrarian feudalism" and they will be more antidemocratic "the more they rely on state-backed coercion rather than on the working of the market" to control their labor force. They are also under threat from peasants with small or no land holdings "because they demand land more frequently than workers insist on control of the means of production" (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992). There are two usual suspects for "labor-repressive" landlords in the South Pacific: chiefs and big plantation owners.

Chiefs. The typical form of precontact land tenure in the South Pacific was by kinship group. However, in the more extreme forms of precontact Polynesian chieftaincy, particularly in Hawaii, chiefs did dispossess kinship groups and claim to own the land themselves. Kirch describes how by the time of European contact, "Hawaiian society had come to comprise a conical clan of chiefs superposed over a truncated class of commoners who worked the land and paid tribute to their lords" (1989:257). Commoners had "lost their genealogies, and they lost direct control of their land," though vestiges of reciprocity remained (Kirch 1989:257, 260-261). Stratification was also taking place in Tonga, where land was "allocated by the paramount to his subordinate chiefs, who in turn respected the rights of commoners in exchange for regular tribute, and for labour when required" (Kirch 1989: 232).

Elsewhere in Polynesia, kinship, the need for popular support in competition with other chiefs, and the possibility of rebellion kept relations between chiefs and commoners more reciprocal. Tribute was repaid in

various ways, and chiefs could not in practice dispossess those who failed to pay.

The Hawaiian monarchy did not survive, but the emerging Tongan monarchy redeployed itself in ways that demonstrate an intimate and intricate relationship between landownership, labor, and democracy, with implications also for gender (as Gailey 1987 shows). Briefly, Tonga's king claimed to own all land, though some was subject to nobles as hereditary estates. Traditional rights of use were codified and later expressed as an entitlement for each adult male of a block of land and a house site. In-kind donations and labor service to chiefs were formally banned but replaced by a tax-rent. Adult males got the right to vote for representatives to a parliament dominated by the king's nominees and representatives of the nobles. Meanwhile women--particularly non-chiefly women--were losing the influence they had held through kinship, particularly as sisters, and as producers of traditionally valued goods such as fine mats (Gailey 1987). Introduced religion and the new laws increasingly addressed women through men, as wives, and they did not get the vote until 1960. Thus the earliest form of democracy, at least in terms of universal adult-male suffrage, emerged from one of the more-stratified traditional systems. Clearly, suffrage is part of a (continuing) struggle in which the king must often appeal for popular support against the nobles who might challenge him.

This popular mechanism appears more obviously in places like Western Samoa and Fiji, where contenders for paramount titles are more numerous. In the terms of Rueschemeyer et al.'s argument, these systems are only partly labor repressive and have not actually dispossessed the producers from the land. The systems are thus not fully "feudal" in the sense, say, implied in the Labour party's criticism of the chiefly system in Fiji (National Federation Party and the Fiji Labour Party Coalition 1991:34-35). Chiefs may, of course, be trying to become more feudal. In Fiji, chiefs get state help in ensuring tribute from the use of land in the 22.5 percent of rents reserved for chiefs by the Native Land Trust Board (Kamikamica 1987:231). However, they do not own the land and they cannot dispossess people from it nor alienate the land itself (though they may claim some of its product).

Big Plantation Owners. The second possible candidates for antidemocratic landlords are the big plantation owners: Unilever in the Solomon Islands, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in Fiji, the Société Française des Nouvelles-Hébrides, and so on. Their political power was based not on feudal hangovers but on their centrality in the early colo-

nial political economy, particularly as a source of government revenue. However, like feudal landlords, they had little interest in expanding democracy to include representatives of labor, the landless, or smallholders.[11]

There might be several ways in which comparison would show the antidemocratic character of plantation ownership. My first hypothesis is that democracy might be more likely before plantations were established or in places where there was less alienation of land. Or, since Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992) emphasize "relative class position"--a struggle between generally white male landlords and generally nonwhite male and female workers and tenants--we might see the gap between the acquisition of the franchise by white men and others as an indicator of contest, and (a second hypothesis) expect that the gap would be least where there was no plantation agriculture and most where it was dominant.

Table 2 tallies the extent of land alienation, by freehold or leasehold,

TABLE 2. Land Alienation and Representative Democracy

	Private Freehold or Leasehold (% of total area)	Responsible Executive (year)	Universal Suffrage (year)
Tuvalu	0	1978	1967
Niue	0	1974	1960
Cook Islands	1	1965	1957
Papua New Guinea	1	1975	1964
Solomon Islands	3	1978	1967
Tonga	4	No	1960
Western Samoa	5	1962	1991
Vanuatu	15	1980	1975
New Caledonia	23	No	1951
Guam	24	1971	1931
Fiji[a]	32	1970, 1992	1963

Sources: (Cook Islands) Crocombe 1987:64; (Fiji) Ward 1985:29; (Guam) Sounder 1987:221; (New Caledonia) Ward 1982:33; (Papua New Guinea) Papua New Guinea 1973:45; (Niue) Tongatule 1981:27; (Solomon Islands) Larmour 1981:31; (Tonga) Maude and Sevele 1987:126; (Tuvalu) Naniseni 1981:11; (Vanuatu) Van Trease 1984:22; (Western Samoa) Thomas 1981:47.

[a]The figure for Fiji is particularly large as it includes land leased on behalf of its traditional owners by the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB). Some is leased to smallholders and some for plantation-style agriculture. There is no reason to count it out simply because it is "Fijian": As an institution, the interests of the NLTB are opposed to those of autonomous smallholders (who want lower rents or freehold title) and to those of labor (who want higher wages, either at the expense of rents or profits).

in countries for which figures are available. Land ownership is important because fear of its loss was supposed, in Rueschemeyer et al.'s argument, to drive landlords' hostility to democracy. The data, however, show no apparent relationship between the extent of alienation and relative lateness in achieving responsible government or universal suffrage. Part of the reason may be in the measures themselves: Not all alienated land is used for plantations, and these modern totals do not allow the attention to historical sequencing required by Rueschemeyer et al.'s argument. Some land, particularly in New Caledonia, was alienated for smallholdings; and land alienated for plantation purposes has latterly been put to other, less labor-intensive uses, such as cattle ranching or residential subdivisions in Vanuatu. The political weight of plantation owners has been reduced since independence, as companies have been wholly or partly nationalized or reorganized around smallholders, as in Fiji, Western Samoa, and the Solomon Islands.

However, looking back to Table 1 there is some support for the first of our two hypotheses: The brief precolonial experiments with democracy took place in territories relatively free of land alienation (for example, Rarotonga in the Cook Islands).

Tonga is evidence for the first hypothesis: earliest democracy and relatively little land alienation or equivalent indigenous plantation agriculture. The causal flow might in fact be the other way. Wider suffrage creates the possibility of resisting consolidation, enclosure, and alienation of land.

There is not much evidence here for the second hypothesis, that the gap between white male and universal suffrage is longest where plantation agriculture is dominant. Such gaps existed in Fiji and New Caledonia, each of which experienced substantial land alienation, but also in Tonga and Western Samoa, which did not. The Fiji-Western Samoa-Tonga cluster suggests chiefliness might have had an effect.

Guam might be the exception that proves the rule. Its history of Spanish plantations is more like Latin America's. It won universal suffrage under U.S. control in 1931, but half of the alienated land is now used for military rather than plantation purposes.

The Working Class. The other side of "relative class power" is the working class, defined in terms of its reliance on selling its labor to subsist and its lack of the guarantees of subsistence provided by membership in a landholding group. We might look for this working class in plantations and mines that provide both the circumstances and oppor-

tunity to organize for narrowly industrial and wider political goals, such as democracy (which may then be instrumental in promoting industrial goals like minimum wages or health and safety legislation). South Pacific trade unions have promoted generally democratic principles (such as a common electoral roll in Fiji), as well as particular political parties (such as the Solomon Islands General Workers Union and the Solomon Islands Nationalist party; see Frazer 1992).

Ian Frazer's 1990 account of the postwar Maasina Rule movement in the Solomon Islands provides a neat example of the interaction of the working class with Rueschemeyer et al.'s other factors. Maasina Rule was a popular movement based on Malaita, an island that had provided labor for plantations elsewhere in the Solomon Islands and in Australia. Members of the movement drifted into confrontation with the colonial government over what Frazer calls the movement's "collective boycott" of labor recruitment and its replacement of colonial rule at the local level with its own islandwide institutions. Its leaders were arrested in 1947 and tried for sedition. Frazer argues that although the movement has tended to be analyzed as a precursor of Solomon Islands nationalism, it also expressed an "industrial consciousness" developed by working on the plantations and for the U.S. army during the war. Its challenge was not only to the legitimacy of the colonial government but to the viability of the plantation economy.

Coincidentally with the Maasina Rule, the postwar British Labour government was pressing its colonies to reform their labor legislation, against the resistance of colonial planters. The legislation was changed in the Solomon Islands, but not because of local pressure, Frazer concludes. Reform "owed more to international labour conventions than local circumstances" (Frazer 1990:202).

Frazer's case demonstrates, on the one hand, Rueschemeyer et al.'s argument that capitalist development opens up spaces for democracy and creates a working class to press for it. Maasina Rule's political goals were clearly democratic, and broader democracy was a condition for the pursuit of particular industrial concerns. The middle class that is often credited with pressure for democracy was quite absent from the postwar Solomon Islands. Frazer argues that early class struggles also took this wider political form in England and notes that Maasina Rule leaders were prosecuted under "the same laws used to suppress combinations of workers in early industrial England" (1990: 191). Specifically, industrial organizations like trade unions came later in England and not to the Solomon Islands until the 1960s. The case also shows the impor-

tance of transnational factors, such as the political complexion of the metropolitan government and the role of international conventions in particular domestic outcomes.

State Autonomy

Having a responsible executive is significant for state autonomy. Colonial states are relatively autonomous of the societies they govern, but some may be more vulnerable to local pressures and more dependent on (say) local revenue and personnel than others. Indirect rule, for example, may mean that colonial governments are manipulated by the traditional authorities they govern through. Or a requirement that the colonial government raise its own revenue may make it overly dependent on foreign investment or local business interests that it can tax. Yet in particular cases, and with support from the metropolitan capital, colonial officials may be able to resist determined pressure. The British Solomon Islands Protectorate government, for example, stood up to Unilever over its demands to import Asian labor in the 1920s (Laracy 1983) and by reclaiming undeveloped land from the company on Kolombangara island (Bennett 1987:33). The colonial state's autonomy may also allow it to encourage the formation of trade unions in spite of pressures from local business or to introduce female or universal suffrage in spite of hostility from masculinist or traditional interests.

To the extent that an independent state is staffed and funded from local sources and responsible to locally elected politicians, it will be less autonomous of the local society. It may become an arena within which those antagonisms are fought out. Accordingly, political independence may tend to reduce state autonomy from society, and if local and international sources of power are hostile to democracy, then colonially introduced democracy may become more vulnerable. Particularly, if it is overthrown there may be less pressure to restore it.

Transnational Structures of Power

We have seen that the introduction of democracy has been an effect of what was happening in metropolitan countries as well as the pressures for and against democracy in each colony. International firms are another powerful influence on colonial policy and can affect the introduction and operations of democracy directly and indirectly, through actions in the colony and those in the metropole. Direct effects include financial support for particular candidates or defining issues through

media ownership. Indirectly, popularly elected candidates find the need to attract and retain foreign investment sets limits for the scope of democracy. These are not just transnational effects, as governments must also anticipate the effects of their actions on the "confidence" of domestic investors.

More general transnational effects on democracy include the role of the United Nations and its agencies in promoting decolonization and supervising elections, for example in Papua New Guinea and the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (which became Palau, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia). Transnational strategic and military factors have also determined the prospects for democracy in the South Pacific. U.S. strategic interests in Micronesia have limited the scope for the exercise of democracy: The United States pressed Palau to vote to change its nuclear-free constitution. The Cold War justified the displacement of populations for nuclear testing in French Polynesia and what became the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The U.S. military presence on Guam limits the scope of action of the local legislature, for example, over land use matters.

However, military factors are not necessarily or entirely antidemocratic. The Second World War had a generally democratic effect. It showed that colonial governments could be defeated by non-Western people. It provided liberating and well-paid experiences of working with the Americans, inspiring the Maasina Rule leaders described above. It also led to the Atlantic charter and trusteeship provisions, which made the colonial governments give postwar priority to development and welfare.

Foreign aid has had a similarly ambiguous effect on democracy, Since the end of the Cold War the World Bank and aid donors have begun to make aid conditional on democratic reforms, particularly in Africa (Jeffries 1993). Australia, New Zealand, and the United States have also done the same in relation to Fiji after the coups. Aid to nongovernment agencies (newspapers, women's groups, etc.) can strengthen civil society against the state and promote the interests of women in spite of masculine parliamentary indifference. However, to the extent that aid is intergovernmental, it also serves to increase the state's local autonomy, which (depending on local structures of power) may allow it to resist local pressure for or against democracy. To the extent that intergovernmental aid, particularly military assistance, is governed by strategic concerns, then the donor may be indifferent to the internal character of the recipient regime.

Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens found that racial and ethnic divisions became important "when they are linked to class and/or where racial and ethnic groups are differentially linked to the state apparatus"; at the limit, "these divisions may constitute social segments that must be treated much like classes themselves" (1992:48). This formulation seems to me a good way through what has become a bitter but inconclusive academic debate whether the 1987 crisis in Fiji was "really about" ethnicity or class.[12] It reasserts the role of politics in organizing around social divisions and takes note of the way that the state can organize, and disorganize, potentially collective actors such as classes or ethnic groups.

Rueschemeyer et al. do not deal very thoroughly with gender divisions, arguing that (historically) class inclusion has preceded gender inclusion, Class inclusion, they argue, has been more violently resisted, perhaps because class relations "are more intimately linked to state interventions in society." However, they note that when women did get the vote, "their voting participation did not significantly change the political spectrum in any country" (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992:48). In Western Samoa, for example, the Human Rights Protection party was returned to power after universal suffrage substantially raised the proportion of women in the electorate *(Samoa Sunday Observer,* 7 April 1991).

Conclusions

Representative democracy was installed as the outcome of a sustained local struggle only in some parts of the South Pacific region. Elsewhere its coming reflected earlier struggles in metropolitan countries and their other colonies, refracted through those former colonies' membership of the United Nations. The Second World War, the Cold War, and their endings also shaped the conditions for democracy in the region.

Certain indigenous traditions are consistent with ideas of direct democracy, and even chiefly traditions suggest circumstances in which popular resistance may be justified. However, representative democracy's lack of local roots may have mattered less before independence than after, when states settled in to the societies they governed. Meanwhile, economic development has brought into being new classes of people with potentially opposing interests in democracy.

Although the idea of representative democracy is now pervasive in

the South Pacific, it is not always liberal in the sense of giving priority to individual over community values. Multicultural polities like Fiji or Papua New Guinea may need to recognize community as well as individual rights and make compromises between the two. To extend the *Fiji Times* metaphor, representative democracy is a foreign flower that grows in different containers: independent states, unincorporated territories, and so on. The soil in which it is planted is becoming more layered and sedimented by class formation and migration. Its growth continues to depend as much on the international weather as on the domestic soil.

NOTES

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1. The region provides opportunities for examining other issues in democratic theory. Lawson (1991) considers that democracy implies the presence of legitimate opposition and concludes that Fiji was never really a democracy even before the 1987 coups. Fiji and New Caledonia exemplify tensions between indigenous rights and liberalism that are sympathetically explored by Kymlicka (1989) in relation to Canada. The extension of suffrage in Western Samoa provides an opportunity to explore feminist arguments about the limitations on representation (Phillips 1991) and the relationship between gender, family, and civil society (Pateman 1988). The referenda that broke up the U.S. and British colonies in Micronesia, and separatism in Melanesia, provide early examples of issues of self-determination that have become more pressing on the international system since the end of the Cold War (Buchanan 1992).

2. The South Pacific provides opportunities for two kinds of comparison, distinguished by Przeworski and Teune as "most similar systems" and "most different systems" (1970:31-39); it can be treated as a region of similarity, "sealed by history or geography" (Dogan and Pelassy 1984:15). Another strategy, suggested by Castles (1989:2-3), is to compare in order to isolate the puzzling or deviant cases, which then require further explanation

(Tonga often plays this exceptional role in making sense of South Pacific politics). I use all three strategies in this article: Tables 1 and 2 compare the countries in a given region with each other; arguments derived from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe are introduced; and I also occasionally dwell on interesting exceptions, such as--depending on the circumstances--Tonga, Western Samoa, Guam, or Papua New Guinea.

3. For a self-consciously nationalist account of South Pacific politics, see Robie 1989.

4. The Solomon Islands 1987 review, for example, advocated the restoration of capital punishment, limits on the introduction of new religions, limits on the number of political parties, limits on freedom of movement between provinces, and discrimination in favor of indigenous people (Larmour 1989:204). In setting up a similar committee in Vanuatu, the prime minister called upon it to overhaul constitutional provisions for human rights (Adams 1991:419).

5. "Supernatural power or efficacy, transferred from the deities to the chief by virtue of his descent" (Kirch 1989: 288).

6. "Sacred, prohibited" (Kirch 1989:288).

7. In a reverse process "the West" is often "occidentalised," to borrow Sedgewick's phrase (1990:242), when islanders talk about "its" individualism, lack of morality, and so on.

8. The phrase comes from Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983. In the South Pacific this approach was anticipated by Crocombe (1964) and France (1969) in relation to land tenure. For recent discussions, see Keesing 1989 and Jolly 1992.

9. So-called universal suffrage is, in fact, adults only, thus concealing a currently unquestioned bias against young people below the voting age.

10. Electors to the Tahitian General Council included indigenous people, but they were subject to a French literacy requirement (Henningham, pers. com., 1992). Danielsson says that the council worked "largely for the benefit of the French settlers," which is a slightly different point (1983:194-195). Similarly, Pryor is skeptical about the Rarotongan assembly, noting that the three representatives were "nominally chosen by the people but in practice largely determined by the ariki" (1983: 160). Nevertheless, if only formally, the principle of universal suffrage had been introduced and stands as a potential critique of both chiefly and colonial bureaucratic authority.

11. Mine owners, who were influential in the political economy of Nauru and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and who are becoming increasingly influential in Papua New Guinea, might have had a slightly different mix of interests and threats.

12. See Robertson and Tamanisau 1988, Sutherland 1992 for class; see Scarr 1988 and Ravuvu 1991 for ethnicity.

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