
EDITOR'S FORUM

STATES AND SOCIETIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

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Recent events such as the coups in Fiji and the attempt of Bougainville to secede from Papua New Guinea have raised questions about the appropriateness of foreign-style political institutions for societies in the Pacific. Such questions are not new in the South Pacific: they lay behind, for example, the proposals for decentralization, greater recognition of customary law, and incorporation of chieftaincy in a number of countries at independence. They were repeated in a recent review of the Solomon Islands constitution.¹ They were put more stridently in the *taukei* movement's submission to the Great Council of Chiefs in Fiji: "The two principal ideas of democracy--liberty (or freedom) and equality--are foreign values, and are indeed contrary to the Fijian way of life where liberty exists only within one's social rank and equality is strictly constrained by a fully developed social hierarchy."²

Questions about the appropriateness of such foreign political institutions have differing political purposes. In the western Pacific the questions have had a critical quality. In Papua New Guinea, for example, they have been raised by religious leaders and intellectuals critical of the state structures inherited from colonial rule. In the eastern Pacific, where traditional structures were often more hierarchical, questions about appropriateness have had a more conservative quality, and church leaders and intellectuals make guarded appeals to liberal values when challenging them, as, for example, in Tonga.

Independence and the idea of a nation-state promised a new and closer relationship between state and society. However, concern with

appropriateness of institutions is not limited to the independent states, nor does independence seem to be a necessary, let alone a sufficient, condition for change in state-society relations. U.S. territories such as the Northern Marianas and American Samoa have rejected independence, but the voters nevertheless wish that their continuing links with the United States will allow them autonomy over matters such as land, immigration, the legal system, and the perpetuation of chieftaincy.

This article approaches the question of appropriateness through the relationship between "state" and "society" in the South Pacific. Both terms are broad and loose, but they provide a framework in which the distinctive character of political institutions in the South Pacific can be examined from several theoretical perspectives.

The article will first consider what is meant by the state, as opposed to the government, and the historical development of states in the region. It will consider statelessness and chieftaincy, and distinguish the state from "civil society." Then it will look for some comparative statistical indicators of the role of the independent states in South Pacific societies. Finally, it will consider the way parliaments link state and society through different ideas of representation.

There are two general reasons for focusing attention on the state in the region: one to do with policy and the other, with political theory. The policy reason is what Toye has called the "counterrevolution" in development theory.³ It is distrustful of state intervention and favors privatization of public enterprises and deregulation of private sector activity. The policy justification has been willingly adopted by many Pacific Island politicians and public servants.⁴ Political theory arises from a renewed scholarly interest in the state, which behavioral political science had dissolved into a broader notion of the "political system" and which Marxism had tended to treat as simply an instrument of class rule. Having been "brought back in," the state is increasingly being written about in comparative historical context.⁵

States and Governments

Writings relevant to the state in the South Pacific have been in roughly three traditions: constitutional-legal;⁶ Marxist political economy;⁷ and insider accounts of the politics of particular countries.⁸ There is some overlap; for example, in Peter Fitzpatrick and Yash Ghai's writing on the political economy of law.⁹ Each tradition has its potential limits, which individual writers have often transcended. The constitutional-legal tradition is vulnerable to formalism: a preoccupation with what

documents say, rather than the way they are used. The tradition of Marxist political economy is vulnerable to reductionism: the explanation of political activity in exclusive terms of society or economy. Insider accounts may be uneven, and difficult to compare systematically. Instead of repeating or summarizing the existing literature, this article tries a slightly different tack: putting the state at center, but asking questions about its relationship to society.

Several traditions of thinking about the modern state are relevant to our concerns with the South Pacific: Weberian, Marxist, and a strand of neoliberalism that goes back to Adam Smith.

The Weberian tradition deals particularly with the coercive character of the state: "a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."¹⁰ For our purposes, this famous definition begs and raises some questions. It neglects the question of "community." The colonial state, for example, typically governs a very heterogeneous community; and the Fijian state (for example) is organized around the idea of two or more communities. The definition treats the legitimate monopoly of physical force as an empirical question. The Papua New Guinea state, for example, often fails the test, in its persistent problems with "law and order." On the one hand, what is called "tribal fighting" is still regarded as a legitimate method of resolving certain kinds of disputes. On the other hand, in its campaign against domestic violence the state is trying to extend its control over what was considered a legitimate use of violence by men against women--until feminists called attention to it. The political maneuvering in Fiji between the two coups is particularly illuminated by Weberian categories of legitimacy: legal authority contending with Rabuka's charisma and the Great Council of Chiefs' claims to traditional authority.

Marxist traditions put the state in the context of economic development and historical change,¹¹ relevant to modern concerns with the economic, rather than the military, role of states and to a comparative historical understanding of states. In Marxist theory, class conflict provides the motor of historical change. The Polynesian protostates were clearly based on sharply drawn and economically antagonistic social classes. Classes in modern South Pacific societies seem more fluid and emergent, absent and awkward. Fitzpatrick sees one of the tasks of the state as "containment" of challenging class-formation by the conserving traditional institutions such as chieftaincy.¹² Class-based trades unions, however, have begun to be represented in state institutions, such as provident funds, and to intervene in electoral politics: for example, in

Kiribati in the late 1970s and in the Solomon Islands since the mid-1970s. Trade union leaders were represented in Fiji's Alliance Party cabinets, and unions were behind the formation of the Labour Party in Fiji in 1985.

The third tradition, justifying a "minimal" state, goes back to Adam Smith's "three duties of the sovereign": defense, police, and those public works that would be unprofitable for the private sector.¹³ It was expressed by the libertarian right-wing Phoenix Corporation, which gave moral and material support to Jimmy Stevens's Nagriamel movement in what became Vanuatu during the late 1970s, and by the Mamaloni government in the Solomon Islands in the early 1980s. It has become more mainstream and influential through the privatization policies of the World Bank, and (in Papua New Guinea) through the publications of the business-funded Institute of National Affairs.

We need to distinguish the "state" as a permanent, largely bureaucratic apparatus from the "government" as a smaller and usually transient group of politicians and senior officials who try, with more or less success, to give state activity coherence and direction. Independent governments, for example, inherited states that sometimes proved resistant to direction. The "governing" activities of Papua New Guinea's nineteen provincial governments, for example, consist of their legislative, executive and planning functions, which consume an average of only 6 percent of their total funding.¹⁴ The rest is spent on activities such as running schools and building roads, which persist even if the provincial legislative assemblies are abolished or--as happens increasingly--are suspended on grounds of mismanagement.

Historical Development

The relationship between "state" and "society" in the South Pacific has gone through several historical stages. First, as territorially centralized political institutions, states are quite recent introductions into much of the region. Melanesian societies, for example, were typically "stateless," in ways discussed below.

Second, what Goldman calls "proto states" were emerging in the eastern Pacific before and during the period of early contact with Europeans. Chiefly political systems were becoming increasingly stratified, specialized, centralized, and geographically extensive in Tahiti, Manga-*reva*, Tonga, Rarotonga, and (particularly) Hawaii. Dealings with European missionaries and mercenaries influenced the latter stages of this emergence, but it had its own much longer term internal dynamic.¹⁵

Third, states were occasionally pieced together in the period between contact and direct colonial rule. The histories of the Cakobau government in Fiji (1871-1874) and of the federal government in the Cook Islands (1891-1899) show how states can be precarious inventions.¹⁶ These transitional states drew on traditional and introduced forms of government, indigenous as well as foreign officials.¹⁷ There are interesting parallels with the states that emerged from the other end of the colonial tunnel, with decolonization.

Fourth, the Tongan state is a unique combination of the second and third stages: built on a Polynesian protostate, using the forms of other transitional states in Hawaii, Tahiti, or Fiji, but surviving them to the present.

Fifth, apart from Tonga, all of the region came under colonial rule. A line of Marxist scholarship argues that the colonial state is very different from the metropolitan states of which it is an extension. The colonial state incorporates a more heterogeneous local society, it relies more on coercion or acquiescence than on consent, and it is particularly concerned with economic extraction. To the extent that these differences carry forward into independence, we can talk of a distinctively post-colonial state, compromised by its past.¹⁸

Sixth, the region includes "new states," created from the withdrawal of colonial rule. Eight were created in the period 1962-1980: Western Samoa, which became independent in 1962, Nauru (1968), Fiji (1970), Papua New Guinea (1975), Tuvalu (1978), the Solomon Islands (1978), Kiribati (1979), and Vanuatu (1980).¹⁹ Decolonization was accompanied by division (of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony into Kiribati and Tuvalu) and disaggregation to provincial or regional governments.²⁰ Legally sovereign, they remain economically dependent. Five more states, though self-governing, have compromised sovereignty in relations of "free association" with their former colonial rulers. New Zealand remains formally responsible for the foreign affairs of the Cook Islands and Niue, whose inhabitants have the valuable right to live and work as citizens in New Zealand. The Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia have their own "foreign affairs capacity," but it is qualified by their acquiescence to the Compact of Free Association, which gives the United States continuing rights to intervene in their foreign policies. Without the compacts, however, they would not even have become self-governing. In the late 1980s minorities of voters in Palau were still resisting the terms being imposed by the United States for "free association."

All of the South Pacific is now included within a grid of modern states. It was an imposition of nineteenth-century European imperial-

ism, but penetration of the new and often arbitrary political spaces created by the partition of the South Pacific was slow and uneven. We can take two contrasting examples. In the Cook Islands there was a long period of trade and missionary contact before indigenous political institutions were reconstituted as a federal government, which was then supplanted by direct colonial rule from Wellington.²¹ By contrast, people in the western Highlands of what is now Papua New Guinea had a much more recent and direct experience of colonial officialdom. As late as the 1920s the Australian government was publishing maps of Papua and New Guinea showing degrees of official control around the coasts. The Highlands were simply left blank.²² The first contact did not occur until the 1930s. The incorporation of the region into the wider economy and society happened under close and direct state supervision without a preceding period of commercial and mission contact and indirect rule, which was characteristic of the eastern Pacific.²³

The character of these states has been changing since they came into being. As in metropolitan countries, there has been an enormous expansion of state activity since the World War II. The PNG public service, for example, grew from 1,300 public servants in 1950 to 29,000 at independence in 1975, peaking at 51,000 in 1980 before entering a period of restraint and reductions in the 1980s.²⁴

Statelessness

Writings in political science generally assume the existence of states. "Statelessness" tends to be treated as hypothetical, as part of an explanation or justification for the existence of states. While the phrase "stateless" denotes an absence or deficit, reversing the emphasis may be instructive, as Sagan suggests, to start with kinship and define states in terms of its absence or diminution.²⁵ This makes states the exception. It draws attention to the difficulties and reversals in their historical development, the role of chiefdom in reducing the effects of kinship, and the residues of kinship within modern states. Nationalism and ethnicity, for example, are in many ways extended forms of kinship, and often draw on identities and symbols that existed before the introduction of states. The prevalent concern with official and political "corruption," particularly in Papua New Guinea, is partly about the conflict between the obligations of kinship and public service--at least, that is the way corrupt officials defend their actions.

We can approach the analysis of "statelessness" from two directions, from anthropology and from political science. Starting from anthropol-

ogy, Southall identifies four characteristics of "stateless societies."²⁶ First, they are "multipolities." The largest "political" units--within which people accept an obligation to settle disputes without fighting--nest within more inclusive, but vaguely defined, wider social units. The vagueness is important: "it need not be an absolutely and uniquely bounded entity in space or time, but . . . its effective field may differ from one person to another and certainly from one family or primary settlement to another."²⁷ Second, these multiple political systems are brought together by broader ritual action. Third, they tend to be organized internally by principles of complementary opposition, for example, between lineage groups. Fourth, legitimacy is widely distributed, not delegated from a central place or person: "fundamental responsibility for the maintenance of society itself is much more widely dispersed throughout its varied institutions and the whole population, at least, usually, all its adult males."²⁸

As Southall suggests, this picture of individual responsibility and action, adding up to a wider, and benevolent, social order is rather like the *laissez-faire* economics that were influential throughout the world in the 1980s. It could also be related to the idea of dispersed, nonsovereign, "capillary" power found in the writing of Michel Foucault.²⁹

Starting from the political science perspective, Michael Taylor uses many examples from Melanesian anthropology to identify the means by which small communities provide themselves with law and order without a centralized, coercive state. He defines communities in terms of three characteristics: common beliefs and values; face-to-face and many-sided relationships; and reciprocity among members. Within such communities, law and order is maintained by:

- (i) the threat of "self help" retaliation
- (ii) the offer of reciprocity and the threat of its withdrawal
- (iii) the use of sanctions of approval and disapproval, the latter especially via gossip, ridicule and shaming, and
- (iv) the threat of witchcraft accusations and supernatural sanctions.³⁰

Chieftaincy

The classic comparison is made by Sahlins, between Melanesian "big men," achieving leadership, and Polynesian "chiefs," inheriting it. Douglas finds Sahlins's ideal types too sharply drawn and gives examples of chiefs in Melanesia and achievement in Polynesia.³¹ Goldman

questions whether ascription and achievement are in practice opposed, asking of Polynesia: "when the heir apparent must meet standards of achievement to inherit the office, what do we call it?"³²

However, we are less interested in "leadership" than in what is led: the character of the political system, particularly the presence of a state. Goldman identifies three types of chiefly political system: traditional, where chiefs had a largely religious role; open, in which there was more emphasis on the military and political role of chiefs; and stratified, which in a way combined the two in a protostate that claimed religious authority for its domination.³³

Whereas Sahlins and Douglas focus on ascription among the chiefly line, Sagan sees a wider growing away from kinship as a principle of social organization. Headmen and clan leaders, he argues, dealt with people on a face-to-face basis, but "a chief is a political leader who rules over people with whom he does not come into contact and over people with whom he has no kinship relation."³⁴ Sagan's rejection of contact and kinship is too stringent to apply to most South Pacific chieftaincies, but he does draw attention to a new scale of political organization, which was being achieved in some of the Polynesian protostates by use of warfare as a means of integration and involved new--often tyrannous--relationships between chiefs and commoners.³⁵ Territory begins to succeed kinship as an organizing principle, and land is allocated and reallocated centrally, rather than by local custom.

The precarious and coercive character of these protostates is reminiscent of the early days of the establishment of colonial rule and contrasts with the apparently more peaceful character of late colonial rule. One change seems to be in the directness of coercion. As Sahlins describes it, chiefly systems exacted labor and produce from commoners to be consumed in ceremony and warfare and redistributed to buy support: "Redistribution of the fund of power was the supreme art of Polynesian politics."³⁶

Chiefly exactions have been carried forward into state structures in Tonga, through the payments required for permission to take up entitlements to land, and in Fiji, through the 30 percent of rents for land leased through the Native Land Trust Board that goes automatically to various chiefs.³⁷

Writing about the transition to capitalism in Europe, Brenner contrasts the chiefly process of accumulation (with its political dynamic) with the process of economic accumulation under capitalism, in which surpluses are reinvested to produce more funds for investment and in which surplus value is exacted from labor not through fear or respect

but through the "silent coercion" of a labor market where the unemployed may starve.³⁸ The transition from political to economic accumulation, suggests Brenner, is historically difficult-capitalism is a rare exception.

State and Civil Society

The revival of "the state" in political science theorizing has led to a more recent interest in a related idea: "civil society." This civil society consists of those institutions and associations that are separate from the state, yet a condition of its existence, and perhaps a counter to its potential to become arbitrary and authoritarian.³⁹ In Europe, its place of origin, the term has been used to refer to institutions such as churches, universities, and trades unions; the revival of the idea was one of the causes and consequences of Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Where universities, schools, and trades unions are all constituted by legislation, managed by public servants and political appointees, and funded by the central government, a countervailing civil society may not prosper.

An idea of civil society seems particularly appropriate to the network of ethnic Fijian and chiefly institutions that surround Parliament and the public service in Fiji: the Fijian Administration, the Great Council of Chiefs, the Native Land Trust Board, and the Alliance Party. And its absence is particularly obvious in Papua New Guinea, where most territory-level institutions are creatures of the state, and their leaders reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them.

The Christian churches in the South Pacific might be usefully analyzed in these terms. Missionaries were deeply involved in the organization of the nineteenth-century protostates and transitional states in the eastern Pacific. They provided an ideological framework for the introduction of colonial rule--and its ending. They continue to provide educational and medical services that parallel or are a substitute for services provided by the state. And they have provided a reservoir of first-generation nationalist leadership and a continuing domestic base for criticism of parochialism and authoritarianism, for example, in church sponsorship of the *Times of Papua New Guinea*, and in the churches' support for reform in Tonga. The political role of the Christian churches may be changing. Fundamentalism is having an increasing impact on South Pacific politics, but in an authoritarian rather than liberal direction, particularly, but not only, in Fiji since the coups.⁴⁰

In the South Pacific, however, we need a broader conception of civil

society to include associations such as clans and kinship groups that mediate between individuals and the state. Their existence sets powerful limits on state action, for example, over the acquisition of land.⁴¹ Of Africa, Hyden has written about "societies without a state" and the state suspended "in mid-air" above the societies it purports to govern.⁴² In such circumstances, territorial-level institutions, such as universities or trade unions, may be too dependent upon or intimidated by the state to exercise any countervailing power, but clan and kinship provide effective bases of resistance and protection for individuals at the local level.

That state and society can (and should) be separated is in some ways a characteristically liberal position. It contrasts with more organic views of state and society argued, for example, by the *tauvei* movement in Fiji. It was part of Adam Smith's purposes, for example, to wean the state away from the economy and restrict itself to providing the domestic conditions in which the "invisible hand" of the market would enhance prosperity.⁴³ The withdrawal of European states from enforcement of religious belief was an earlier example of a similar process.

In these terms, colonial states have a rather contradictory quality. On the one hand, they were clearly distinct from and outside the societies they governed. On the other hand, colonial "native regulations" typically made detailed interventions into everyday social and economic life. Independence provides opportunities, and nationalism the rationale, for a whole new set of regulations governing foreign investment, foreign exchange, and immigration. Yet the capacity of the independent states to implement these regulations is variable. A National Manpower Assessment in Papua New Guinea, for example, found that 42 percent of public servants failed to meet the qualifications set down for their positions by the Public Service Commission.⁴⁴ On the one hand, the proliferation of regulations provides opportunities for corruption, as officials use their discretion to waive or apply regulations to extract what economists would call "rent" from applicants for permission. On the other hand, some kinds of corruption express the persistence of kinship values that predated the existence of the state: look after your kin.

Measures of State Presence in Society

Table 1 shows some measures of modern state activity to suggest the relationship between the states and wider society. Available averages for developing and industrial countries are shown for comparison. The figures cover only eight of the independent states; the ninth, Nauru, is secretive about its budget.

For the freely associating and nonindependent states, local and metropolitan staffing and expenditure is more difficult to disentangle. But some information becomes sporadically available. Among the freely associating states, public service employment, excluding public enterprises, in the Cook Islands is 11 percent of the population, which is considerably higher than the average on this measure for industrial countries (7 percent) and developing countries (3 percent).⁴⁵ For French Polynesia, figures from the mid-1970s indicate the predominance of metropolitan expenditure in the territory. The Territorial Assembly budget amounted to only 27 percent of total public expenditure in the mid-1970s. The rest was mostly expenditure by metropolitan departments in the territory, the largest spenders being the Defense Ministry (30 milliard francs between 1976 and 1978, including the Center for Atomic Experiments at Moruroa), followed by the Ministry of Education (9 milliard over the same period).⁴⁶ Put another way, the creation of "national" accounts is one of the characteristics of independence.

Although the figures selected are somewhat arbitrary and unreliable, measurement forces conceptualization and provides a more consistent basis for comparison.⁴⁷ The several distinctions that have to be drawn show how the boundary between state and society is far from clear, and can be drawn widely or narrowly. First, there is the distinction between central, provincial, and local government (figures for the latter are often unavailable). Second, there is the distinction between the public service and the public sector, including parastatals, public enterprises, and quasi-autonomous nongovernment organizations (QUANGOs). In Papua New Guinea, for example, the public service employs about 53,000 public servants, but another 20,000-22,000 people are employed mainly by four large public enterprises: the Harbours Board, Electricity Commission, Post and Telecommunications Corporation, and national airline.⁴⁸ Third, there is the distinction between type of employment: permanent and contract. Statistics are typically kept only for the former, but directly employed local and provincial staff may have the most direct impact on the population. Some countries include teachers among public employees, others treat them separately. Armies often account for a large percentage of public employment and expenditure, and may distort comparisons between countries that are burdened with them (such as Papua New Guinea and Fiji) and countries that are not.

As with national accounts for independent states, the statistics are part of the constitution of organizations, as well as simple reflections of them. Public service commissions, for example, were established to maintain the distinctive and separate character of "public services" and to collect statistics on their members as part of that task. Reforms in the

TABLE 1. **Public Employment, Expenditure, and Land**

	Public Sector Employment as % of Population (1987) ^a	Central Government Expenditure as % of GDP (1985) ^b	Public Land as % of Total Area (1980s) ^c
Fiji	4.5	28	8
Kiribati	3.6	(43)	51
Papua New Guinea	2.2	33	3
Solomon Islands	4.2	39	9
Tonga	3.4	(29)	22
Tuvalu	n a	(147)	3
Vanuatu	n a	(37)	< 1
Western Samoa	2.9	33	11
Average	3.5	33	13
Developing country average	3.7	28	
Industrial country average	9.0	34	

^aCalculated from country statistics in 1988/1989 national development plans held in the National Centre for Development Studies, Canberra. Comparison averages are for 1979/1981, from P. S. Heller and A. A. Tait, *Government Employment and Pay: Some International Comparisons*, Occasional Paper no. 24 (Washington: International Monetary Fund, 1983), table 1.

^bFigures in parentheses are calculated from national plans held in the National Centre for Development Studies, Canberra. They may not be exactly comparable with the others, which are from the International Monetary Fund, *International Financial Statistics Yearbook* (Washington: 1988), 162.

^cFigures calculated from data in national development plans; P. Larmour, R. Crocombe, and A. Taungenga, eds., *Land, People, and Government: Public Lands Policy in the South Pacific* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies in association with Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1981); R. Crocombe, ed., *Land Tenure in the Pacific*, 3d ed. (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987).

1980s designed to decentralize hiring and firing and make public bureaucracies more business-like may mean that such centralized information on employment, expenditure, and pay will no longer be kept.

Figures in Table 1 represent the widest definition of public sector employment, including all levels of government and public enterprises. Generally, Fiji and the Solomon Islands have slightly greater percentages than the developing country average, and Papua New Guinea--in spite of regular complaints about "overgovernment"--has considerably less. The qualifications and effectiveness of these public servants, and their distribution between headquarters and the field, are of course

other matters. However, the island states, like other developing countries, average about half the number of public servants per capita of industrial countries.

The second measure includes money raised and spent by lower-level governments or public enterprises. Figures for GDP used to calculate the percentages include only production converted in cash, and so are difficult to compare with those of developed countries because Pacific Island economies rely much more on subsistence production. There are two dimensions to this problem of estimating the cash value of subsistence production. The first is making Pacific Island figures comparable with figures for more monetized economies by including production that would be counted in measures of GDP in developed countries. The second, raised particularly by feminist scholars, is recognizing and valuing subsistence production in developed countries as well (where it tends to be carried out within households, and disproportionately by women).⁴⁹

With these limits to the data, the percentages for most of the independent states seem closer to industrial than developing country standards. This might be a consequence of relatively unmonetized economies (in which the state takes a greater slice of a smaller cake), higher standards of public services (perhaps a result of a particular type of colonial rule or rulers), or higher costs (because of isolation and small internal markets). The similarity to industrial states is nevertheless surprising, given the absence of comprehensive welfare spending. The transfer payments to the young, poor, unemployed, and elderly that are typical of modern industrial states are largely absent in the independent South Pacific, although overseas remittances perform a similar function. Nevertheless, governments spend similar proportions of their GDP. This is in contrast to the freely associating states and colonies, whose populations qualify for metropolitan levels of welfare payments. Put another way, the gap between state and society in the independent South Pacific is wider than it might be in, say, European social democracies, because of the absence of general welfare provision and the reliance in rhetoric, if not practice, on family, clan, and community to look after old people and cushion unemployment.

The final column deals with another frontier between state and society in the South Pacific: land tenure. Tonga is again exceptional, having nationalized land in the name of the Crown in the nineteenth century, giving all adult males a theoretical right to an allotment.⁵⁰ However, the "nobility" have the power to disallow registration of allotments, and so may extract high effective rents. In the other countries there is a more or

less sharp distinction made between state-owned or leased land and customary land, whose day-to-day management is regulated by community rather than formal legal norms.⁵¹ The relatively large percentage for Kiribati is accounted for by Christmas Island, which in itself comprises half the nation's total land area, and several other uninhabited islands in the Line and Phoenix groups. Vanuatu's low figure reflects the fact that while the government owns a few sites for airfields and other public purposes, the two main urban centers are leased from landowner corporations. Of these, the suspension of the Vila Urban Land Corporation (VULCAN) in 1987 led to a riot and the eventual attempt by the president to choose a new government.

Metropolitan comparisons would not be particularly relevant or easy to make in the case of land. Issues relating to land impose perhaps the greatest strain on relations between state and society in the South Pacific. For example, government titles and mineral rights are under regular pressure from traditional claimants in Papua New Guinea. Throughout the region further acquisition of absolute title to land for government purposes is politically almost impossible, so that leases and other arrangements are increasingly made.⁵²

In issues related to public employment, government expenditure, and land the line between state and society is artificially sharp: the table does not show the considerable transactions across it. Public employment and expenditure generate multiplier effects on private employment and expenditure. The state intervenes with a wide range of tax deductions or regulations that do not show up as expenditure. And, in terms of land, there is usually provision that prevents its sale abroad while allowing its lease subject to government controls.

Generally, the data in Table 1 indicate that the state as provider of public services (measured by the number of public servants) looms relatively low in South Pacific societies, but the state plays a relatively larger role in the cash economy (but no higher than in industrial countries). While capitalist relations of production may have spread widely throughout the rural areas of the South Pacific, the persistence of customary tenure shows that the state has followed slowly, and indirectly, behind the cash economy.

Representing Society to the State

Parliaments provide a formal, constitutional link between state and society. Changes in the role of a parliament have been the mechanism of decolonization and (in the absence of mass political parties) the parlia-

ment has often provided the motor. Colonies typically have parliaments (which may be chosen from a widening franchise), select their own leaders, and even employ their own officials. But the parliament's link to the state is limited or advisory: the governor or high commissioner or secretary for the interior remains responsible for what in the French colonies are called "state" rather than "territorial" services. Juggling the relationship between high commissioner and Territorial Assembly, and between state and territorial public services, has been characteristic of recent constitutional change in New Caledonia.

Independence cuts the formal link with the metropole and brings the executive into a new relationship with the legislature. The relationship may be one of responsible ministerial government along the lines of the Westminster system or of division of powers with a directly elected presidency. In the South Pacific these are points on a continuum, with a crossover point in eastern Micronesia, where the Marshall Islands has adopted a system of responsible ministerial government while Kiribati has a general election for president from a list of members of parliament. Several PNG provinces also elect their premiers directly.

In the absence of mass political parties, which in African one-party states or Eastern Europe until 1989 have been a strong link between state and society, parliaments are relatively important. The nearest equivalent to such political parties has perhaps been Vanuatu's Vanua'aku Pati, with its grass-roots organizers and annual congresses to which government ministers have been held accountable. But its popular support has been steadily falling, from 67 percent of the vote in the 1979 election that brought it to power to 55 percent in the 1983 general election and 47 percent in 1987.⁵³ In 1983 the party used parliament to shore itself up, by legislation requiring that members of parliament who left their party also had to give up their seat.⁵⁴ The legislation was invoked against the party's former general secretary, Barak Sope, and four others in 1988. They were expelled, along with the entire opposition (on grounds of nonattendance), as part of the crisis that led to the governor-general's intervention and arrest.⁵⁵ The legislation itself was found by a court of appeal to be unconstitutional.

While the Vanuatu parliament looks to be becoming more like its factional neighbors, the Solomon Islands seemed to be moving the other way. In 1989 new Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni announced that he had formed the first majority-party government in the country's history; he did so by persuading members of other parties to switch to his People's Alliance Party (PAP) after the election. But the achievement was reversed a year later when he sacked most of his PAP cabinet,

announced himself to be an independent, and invited former members of the opposition to join him in a new coalition government.⁵⁶

Papua New Guinea has constantly shifting coalition government. During the 1980s there have been several proposals to reduce the opportunity for votes of no-confidence. There is a honeymoon period of six months after the election of the prime minister in which another vote cannot be moved, while a vote close to the due date for a general election simply brings that election forward. This window could be further closed. However, the logic of collective action has so far dictated that while most members may agree that limits on votes of no-confidence are sensible, their own immediate chances of office give them an incentive to defect from any majority formed to change the constitution.

Parliament can "represent" society in various ways.⁵⁷ First, it may be a symbol, legitimating state activity. Second, it may be more or less typical, in a statistical sense, of the society, including or excluding people from particular regions, men rather than women, nobles rather than commoners. Third--and this is the most difficult--it may represent society in the sense of acting on its behalf. As Pitkin argues, representation requires representatives to have some discretion to act on their own. They are not simply the instrument of those they represent, and those granting rights of representation must accept that their representatives will sometimes act differently from the way they themselves would.

Parliaments "represent" societies in each of these ways. In the first, symbolic, sense they do so through nomenclature, architecture, ritual, and procedures. Provisions for houses of *ariki* or *iroij* (chiefs) are also representative in this symbolic sense. That is not to say that they do not also have power. (The Great Council of Chiefs in Fiji was the focus of political maneuver between Fiji's two coups.) Rather, their claim to represent the society is not based on their being typical or on carrying out a mandate.

Parliaments may be representative in the second, statistical, sense in different ways, and electoral boundaries and qualifications may be adjusted to encourage a particular outcome. The overrepresentation of Europeans was a feature of colonial legislatures. The series of French government plans for New Caledonia in the 1980s--named Lemoine, Pisani, Fabius, and Pons after the ministers proposing them--juggled provincial boundaries to ensure Melanesian or European majorities.

The constitutions of Fiji (until 1987), Tonga, and Western Samoa bias representation in particular ways. Until 1987 Fiji's constitution was intended to ensure that, whatever the population, Fijians and Indians

would be equally represented in parliament (and the third category of "General Electors" overrepresented). A proposal to relax the racial requirements for candidature in the twenty-five so-called national seats was rejected by the government in the mid-1980s. A recent draft constitution has proposed a stronger bias towards ethnic Fijian communal representation, with a guaranteed thirty-seven of seventy seats in a lower house, and a bias within that representation towards presumably more-conservative rural areas.⁵⁸

Tonga's constitution, by contrast, reserves seats for the nobility out of proportion to their numbers: nine seats for thirty-three noble titleholders (1:4), nine for 100,000 commoners (1:11,000), and nine (or more) chosen by the king. In 1989 'Akilisi Pohiva led eight of the nine commoner members out of parliament in protest at this imbalance. Two drifted back and the remaining six eventually returned. However, their motion to reduce the number of seats reserved for nobles and to increase those reserved for commoners was defeated (though one of the king's sons voted for it).⁵⁹

Until 1990 Western Samoa's constitution structured election outcomes at the level of voter qualification: to vote you had to have a *matai* title. Only a small proportion of titles were held by women. The number of titles, though, was growing relative to the population (to an estimated 11,000, or 7 percent of the population in the mid-1970s, and perhaps 20,000 in 1990).⁶⁰ If titles were distributed randomly, then Western Samoa's electorate would have been "representative" in the statistical sense of the whole population, even if the whole population did not vote. In October 1990, however, a majority of voters in a referendum favored universal adult suffrage (though a *matai* title would continue to be a necessary qualification for candidates). At the time of writing it was not clear if parliament would respond to the referendum result by amending the constitution,

Another type of representation is involved in questions of platforms and mandates, and whether voters and legislators feel bound together by them.

Even without constitutional biases--in totally "transparent" electoral systems--women are statistically underrepresented in all legislatures, so that some of PNG's provincial constitutions, for example, require the co-optation of women members if none are elected.

The third sense of representation--the acting autonomously on behalf of voters--is best demonstrated by its opposite, the referendum. The referendum is one of the most direct links between state and society, and has been used to validate constitutional arrangements. Where ref-

erenda have been held at independence, they have tended to favor the breakup of colonial states into even smaller units: Kiribati and Tuvalu; the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. Demands for referenda were made by secessionists throughout Melanesia but resisted by colonial authorities and national parliaments. They were made again by Francis Ona and his militants on Bougainville. MPs were once again in the difficult position of claiming to "represent" the people but being unwilling to ask them directly what they think.

Conclusions

To understand the state in the South Pacific we probably need to think of a historical continuum between "statelessness" and "statefulness," of a modern gradient between "state" and "society," of differences among states and among sectors of state activity. States are continually re-deploying within societies. The historical direction is not necessarily one way. In Papua New Guinea, for example, a recent influential report on law and order recommended greater use of "the non-state option," such as community groups, rather than the police.⁶¹ Whether the historical continuum amounts to development (as in the PNG cliché about being a "young country") or to progress (as in Whig and Marxist views of history) is less clear. The Polynesian protostates, for example, were great cultural achievements but at the cost of great military tension and of exactions from a sometimes terrorized population.⁶² The early stages of colonial rule have been similarly violent and repressive. Relations between late-colonial and post-colonial states and their populations seem more contractual: an exchange of public services for political consent. During the 1980s the worldwide reaction against public expenditure put that contract under strain. In Fiji after the coups the relationship between state and society became much more fearful and suspicious, at least as far as nonethnic Fijians were concerned. The relationship between the Papua New Guinea state and Bougainvillean society has also soured.

It may be that congruence between state and society is not completely possible in the South Pacific--or anywhere. There seems to be something about modern states that makes them inherently cosmopolitan, or exploitative, or irresponsible, or vulnerable to capture by a particular ethnic, class, or occupational group. Links between state and society in metropolitan states are also problematic, as shown by the "ethnic revivals" taking place in Europe and the Soviet Union.⁶³ Rather than reflect-

ing the special circumstances of the societies they govern, all states may be driven by external dynamics of international economic competition or their own internal dynamics of bureaucratic professionalism, careerism, and the need for budget revenue.

Rather than saying states should reflect the societies they govern, and vaguely criticizing institutions for their inappropriateness, we should perhaps step back and ask why the relationship between state and society continues to be problematic, despite many cases of decolonization (on the one hand) and of the renegotiation of metropolitan links (on the other). In the South Pacific the "foreignness" of colonial rule may have become mixed up with its "stateness."

NOTES

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