THE POLITICS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY:
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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In the current crisis on Bougainville, arguments about racial and ethnic difference are used to justify secession from the rest of Papua New Guinea. Conflicts are often expressed in racial terms: between blacks and whites and between "black-skinned" Bougainvilleans and "red-skinned" Papua New Guineans. Connor's phrase "ethnonationalism" refers to the doctrine that distinct ethnic groups are--by that token-- entitled to independent statehood (1973). Premdas used this concept to analyze the first round of Bougainville secession in the 1970s (1977). Francis Ona, Bougainville's rebel leader, has argued in cultural terms: "our diverse customs will not allow us to live peacefully together as Papua New Guineans" (*Times of Papua New Guinea,* 7-13 Sept. 1989).

But more seems to be involved than simple assertions of difference. Why have these differences led to conflict? And conflict over what? And why is Bougainville secessionist but other "different" provinces of Papua New Guinea not? Is secession--as Australia's foreign minister, Senator Gareth Evans, has suggested--a disease that will spread unless it is stamped out (*Hobart Mercury,* 30 Jan. 1990)? Or does it thrive only in particular political, economic, and historical circumstances, so that other provinces may be less susceptible?

Bougainville was Papua New Guinea's richest rural province. The rebellion began around the site of the copper mine, which has provided some Bougainvilleans with a high standard of living and drawn thou-

sands of non-Bougainvilleans to the island looking for work. The mine has been the site of classic forms of class conflict between organized workers and management, who argue about wages and conditions of work. Early newspaper reports of the crisis in late 1988 linked protests by landowners to parallel, class-based actions by industrial workers protesting housing conditions. So, what was the link, if any, between the economic opportunities and conflicts opened up by the development of the mine and between the development of ethnic and racial conflict and secessionism? And how exactly would independence resolve Bougainvillean grievances about mining?

In dictionary terms, "ethnicity" originally meant simply "pertaining to race." But "race" is now usually treated as a subcategory of ethnicity. Enloe has pointed out that analysts of Third World politics have been uncomfortable with ethnicity, believing it to be a transitory identification (to be replaced by "nation" or "class") or a concept tarnished through manipulation by colonial governments. However, she says, "Ethnic categorisations have served political elites well precisely when they have struck some vital nerve in a given collectivity" (Enloe 1978: 338). Discomfort with ethnicity is rarely shared by Melanesian intellectuals (e.g., Narokobi 1983a, 1983b); and throughout the South Pacific region the politics of identity and cultural renaissance have often had a liberating, "anti-hegemonic" quality that is hard to square with the view of ethnicity as a simple product of colonial manipulation (Devalle 1989; Chapman and Dupon 1989).

If ethnicity is a sometimes discomforting term, then race is even more so. While scientific racism--such as in theories of eugenics--has been discredited, ideas about race are returning to social science from two directions. First, from behavioral genetics, which has apparently discovered nontrivial differences between racial groups, particularly in IQ scores, though the extent, causes, and significance of these results are strongly contested (see Hay 1985 for a textbook discussion). Second, from sociobiology, which has been less concerned with differences within the human species than with similarities between the "human race" and other animal species (Hay 1985:24-25). The implications of behavioral genetics are still not very clear, but Van den Berghe has constructed a theory of ethnicity derived from sociobiology, which sees ethnic identity as an extension of kinship, while downplaying racial differences as "biologically trivial" (1978). This theory is further discussed below.

Meanwhile, a popular view is that racial differences are not trivial.

This view is sometimes reflected in routine administrative practices, such as censuses, immigration controls, and laws affecting indigenous minorities.

In this article I shall partly disentangle "race" from the more inclusive term "ethnicity," and then look at relationships between them, and between these and class. Finally, I shall consider how the concept of the state, and its activities, influence and are influenced by these differences. Another dimension of difference--gender--needs to be combined in the future.

Race and Ethnicity in Papua New Guinea

Racial discrimination between "whites" or "Europeans" and "natives" was enforced in great detail in colonial Papua and New Guinea (Wolfers 1975; Inglis 1975). While resenting discrimination, Papua New Guineans did not necessarily reject the ideas about racial differences on which it was based. Some Papua New Guineans were suspicious of a late colonial shift in policy towards "multiracial" institutions, and the debates that took place in the House of Assembly before independence about the national constitution rehearsed complex arguments about race, nationality, citizenship, economic opportunity, and the relationship among them (Wolfers 1977). Wolfers concludes:

> Almost every proposal for, or denial of, social, political and economic change had a racial aspect, including the devising of citizenship legislation which would alter the basis on which legal rights were allocated from race, loosely defined, to citizenship. . . . The citizenship debates were remarkable for the frankness with which race relations were discussed and the openness with which the racial attitudes of particular groups were expressed. (1977:382)

The debates were not simply about exclusion of the economically advantaged white settlers. They led to the extension of offers of citizenship to other Melanesians, from Irian Jaya, the Solomon Islands, and the Torres Strait Islands (who at that time posed no serious threat of economic competition).

However, since independence the economic advantages of non-Melanesians have continued to provoke resentment, although the categories have partly shifted from "race" to "citizenship." There have been

regular parliamentary outbursts against the alleged economic opportunism of "naturalised citizens" (PNG 1981). The "dual wage" system (whereby noncitizen contract workers get paid more for the same managerial and professional jobs than citizens) is regularly condemned as a form of apartheid. According to Dorney:

> The black/white division on Bougainville was perhaps more noticeable than almost anywhere else in PNG because of the nature of the Bougainville mine. . . . In this insulated setting BCL was the largest single employer of expatriate labour in PNG, excepting the national government itself. In 1988 the expatriate workforce was 610 out of 3560--seventeen percent. (1990:127-128)

Racial discrimination in wages and conditions has been a persistent theme in the industrial disputes at Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL). Mamak and Bedford have documented the systematic inequalities between "black" and "white" earnings in the early 1970s (1977). In November 1988 mineworkers demonstrated against the racial discrimination in proposals to rehouse them up at the mine site.

Nash and Ogan have detailed the changing perceptions that the Nasioi people, who live around the mine site, have had of themselves and others (1990). The late Mrs. Sereo, chairperson of the Panguna landowners' association and Francis Ona's sister, criticized environmental damage caused by BCL and complained in a newspaper interview that "our own black-skin race is losing its real identity fast because of the intermarriage and sometimes unwanted mixed race children" (*Times of Papua New Guinea,* 23 Feb.-1 Mar. 1989). The improper influence of white people on the PNG government was part of Ona's case for secession. In a letter written in February 1989 he blamed a "white mafia network" for subverting the PNG government (*Times of Papua New Guinea,* 16-22 Feb. 1989, 4). There were also many reports of racism in the security forces on Bougainville. In a typical newspaper report a young man described being beaten up by police who said: "You think you black people are smart? We will make you feel it" (*Times of Papua New Guinea,* 19-25 Oct. 1989).

Apart from race, Papua New Guinea's famous variety of language groups, cultural forms, and Christian religious sects provides a range of potential ethnic markers (Premdas 1988). Clan forms of organization provide the myth of common descent that features in more historicist

conceptions of ethnicity, such as Smith's (discussed below). Given the numerous possible bases of ethnic organization, the interesting question perhaps becomes why social movements do *not* embrace ethnicity. Of "spontaneous local movements" characterized by May as "micronationalist," "few placed much emphasis on ethnicity" (1982:2).

The strategy of Papua New Guinea's constitution makers was to manage ethnicity. Questions of ethnicity, as distinct from race, frequently arise in discussions about local and provincial government boundaries. Papua New Guinea's nineteen provinces are based on colonial administrative districts that did not necessarily correspond to preexisting political, cultural, linguistic, or religious divisions.

Several provinces have introduced systems of "community government," typically on a smaller scale than the old local governments. In Morobe Province, "community government" has been defined and justified by the premier in ethnic terms.

> A community government is made up of 1,500 to 3,000 people, who constitute an ethnic or cultural grouping of people speaking the same language. Within most ethnic-cultural groupings there may be a linguistic minority in a dominant ethnic group which is allowed direct representation in the community government. So for us in Morobe province ethnic-cultural grouping is taken as the basis of the state system. It is not ignored, it is not negated, it is taken as a basis because that is the reality: whatever problems you encounter will start from there. People don't just jump from heaven. They grow from their cultural units. (Samana 1988:42)

Papua New Guinea's Constitutional Planning Committee had specifically preferred "districts" as a basis for provincial government to larger "regions," on the grounds that the latter might become the focus for "ethnic sentiments" and hence "deep national division" (PNG 1974:10/3). Judged "too small" for broader "regional" purposes, provinces have also proved "too large" for others (Jackson 1979:21). Ethnicity in Papua New Guinea has turned out to be almost infinitely divisible: it would be interesting to see whether it has stabilized at the level of the language group (the social atom that Samana proposes) or whether subdivisions emerged among even these small units.

At the very smallest scale, "landownership" has become the typical basis for political mobilization against the state in Papua New Guinea.

"Landowners" are well understood as a kind of ethnic group, defined by myths of common descent, a shared history of perceived injustice (at the hands of foreign plantation owners, the colonial government, or mining companies), and common interests (in getting their land back or a better compensation deal).

Ethnicity

Theories of ethnicity differ in the extent to which it is regarded as something "given," "constructed," or "chosen." The first emphasizes the "primordial" (in Geertz's 1963 language); the second the social, malleable, political character of ethnicity; and the third the process of rational choice among the various potential identities available.

"Given"

Mason locates the question of primordialism in a general theoretical tendency to look for explanations in terms of origins (rather than, say, circumstances or consequences). He argues that the question of primordialism in race and ethnicity can be broken down into at least three subquestions: (1) the extent to which overt physical differences, and/or culture, can have an independent effect, unmediated by meanings; (2) the extent to which nineteenth- and twentieth-century racism in Europe and its offshoots is different from what went before (does it need explaining in its own terms, or simply as an extension of primordial ethnocentrism?); and (3) the extent to which racial and ethnic differences are immutable and natural (Mason 1986:5).

My short answers to these three questions would be "no," "both," and "neither." Theories of perception, particularly the way perception involves stereotyping and typification, might help solve the first question. But if some physical differences are unmediated by meaning, we then need to ask at what point does meaning start to intervene, particularly in relation to culture, which is itself a system of meanings. Geertz, after all, referred to "assumed givens" as he recognized that "culture is inevitably involved in such matters" (1963:109).

The second question is about the distinctive character of the modern world. Clearly, new and distinctive conditions for racial and ethnic conflict, particularly massive movements of population, have emerged through European colonialism and settlement, slavery, and the movements of indentured, "guest," and migrant labor (see Pettman 1988).

Such shifts of population have been particularly recent and relatively, but not absolutely, large in the South Pacific, a feature emphasized by Howard in his account of ethnicity in the region (1989). But the distinctive character of the modern world has not been a simple one of transition from, say, status to class. New ethnic identities have been developed and old ones revived. Rapid economic growth has also created more things to have conflict about, and those succeeding have sometimes turned to theories of racial superiority to justify their advantages to themselves and to others.

The questions of "mutability" and "naturalness" are probably best kept separate. Physical characerics may in fact turn out to be more mutable--through intermarriage and so on--than cultural characteristics, which may be all the more persistent because taken for granted. And what counts as "natural" (and whether it is, for that reason, valued or devalued) is also a cultural product,

"Constructed"

> We shall call "ethnic groups" those. human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of custom or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. Ethnic membership differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity. (Max Weber, quoted in Hechter 1976:1163)

Just as anthropologists have shown that notions of kinship and common ancestry do not necessarily have any biological basis (Sahlins 1977), so historians of the "invention of tradition" have shown that some cultural traditions are quite recently, and deliberately, established (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). However, just because some kinship is fictive and some traditions are invented does not mean most or all are. In both cases the words "manipulation," "extension," or "revision" are probably better than "invention." To paraphrase the famous Marxist tag, people make history, but they do so from material transmitted from the past.

So it may be most sensible, following Yinger (1986), to distinguish "thick" and "thin" forms of ethnicity: in the first, the "given" factors predominate; in the second, the "taken." Anthony Smith's work on

ethnicity and nationalism gives support to both positions. Smith is particularly strong on the role of common history--real, blending into the mythic--in the development of ethnic sentiment. Historians, just as much as linguists or genealogists, produce the material from which ethnic identity is constructed. A common historical experience--for example, of oppression, or migration--becomes for Smith a necessary, but not sufficient, plank for the construction of an ethnic group (1986). In Papua New Guinea we can already see a common history of oppression by BCL, with the P.N.G. security forces becoming an important reinforcement of Bougainvillean claims to ethnic separatism.

On the one hand, Smith's earlier work on "ethnic revivals" emphasized the construction of ethnicity and the role of nationalist intellectuals in researching and reconstructing folk tradition (1981). There are plenty of parallels in the modern South Pacific. A similar process of recovery and revaluation of folk traditions--oral history, traditional land tenure, languages--has been carried out by nationalist intellectuals in the region, aided by institutions such as the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Pacific Studies and the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. On Bougainville, Francis Ona's biography reads somewhat like those of the young, educated people identified in Smith's sociology of ethnic revivals, who, being blocked in their careers, return to their villages to rediscover their roots (1981: 116-133).

On the other hand, Smith's more recent work on the "ethnic origins of nations" emphasizes persistence, and describes how some, but not all, current nation-states can draw on ethnic indentities that go back long before the development of capitalism (1986).

"Chosen"

A third tradition of thinking about ethnicity focuses on the individual, rather than the group, and (if applied to Papua New Guinea) to towns and plantations rather than the countryside. Borrowing from economics the assumption that people are generally rational, self-regarding maximizers, proponents of this tradition note that we are often presented with a range of ethnic identities from which to choose--and we may prefer not to choose any (Hechter 1986). Such rational-choice theories address questions about why individuals join ethnic groups and why some refuse, backslide, or identify with the "wrong" group. These are questions that theories of the givenness or social construction of identities are not good at resolving. We will return to this approach below.

Relationships between Race and Ethnicity

While "race" is often dissolved into broader theories of ethnicity, two approaches distinguish between racial and other markers in ways that seem relevant to understanding Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific.

Van den Berghe's sociobiological argument considers ethnic identity an extension of kinship: "look after your own," particularly your own genes, or those similar to yours (1978). But, perhaps surprisingly, biological notions of race form little part of the argument. First, he argues that "race," as socially defined, has no intrinsic biological significance: "Social race typically seizes on biologically trivial phenotypes, and, equally typically, corresponds only imperfectly with genetically isolated populations" (Van den Berghe 1978:406).

Second, he argues that, historically, cultural markers--language, dress, etc.--have been a much better test of genetic relatedness. Among settled populations, physical differences have been matters of gentle gradients and "physical criteria became salient only after large, strikingly different looking populations found themselves in sudden and sustained conflict" (Van den Berghe 1978:408)

Van den Berghe's argument thus accounts for the modernity of "racial" forms of ethnic identification and discrimination. We do not need to accept or reject the underpinning argument about gene selection to recognize the importance of migration and settlement bringing physically different-looking populations into sudden conflicts: labor migration, after all, is a key plank in Howard's Marxist account of ethnicity in the South Pacific (1989). And the double conflicts on Bougainville-- between black and white, and between red and black-- are parsimoniously explained in terms of conflicts over resources between immigrants and indigenous people, marked by visible but trivial physical differences.

Banton suggests a more sociological kind of relationship between race and ethnicity. He suggests that ethnicity usually refers to processes of inclusion ("us") whereas race refers to categories of exclusion ("them") (1983:106). Ethnicity thus points to processes of group formation and maintenance and to the possibility that potential members may reject the identity proposed for them or decide to drop out. These questions are addressed by theories of rational choice. Racial categories are less open to such individual strategic choices, though categories of people excluded on racial grounds may then turn around and form themselves into an ethnic group. Other excluded categories of people may do the

same; Epstein has analyzed the U.S. gay movement in ethnic terms (1987).

Class

We can distinguish weak and strong notions of class. In weaker versions, class is simply a classificatory scheme, based on income, wealth, or status. Stronger versions, particularly in Marxist approaches, tend to see classes as historical actors "out there," driving history. They emphasize historical changes, irreconcilable conflicts between classes, and the problem of class consciousness: members of a class "in itself" may not recognize their common interests and so not act as a class "for itself" (Przeworski 1977). The notion of ethnicity raises similar questions of consciousness and collective action. A racial group, by contrast, has less of a problem; it is already categorized and stigmatized by others. As with race, popular conceptions of class (e.g., of "the rich") may not correspond to social scientific definitions.

Class in Papua New Guinea

Marxist writers recognize the extreme difficulties of applying class analysis to Papua New Guinea. The industrial working class is tiny, while the bourgeoisie is in some ways absent overseas. In between are a number of awkward classes, such as a "big" and "small" peasantry or the "bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie." While Good believes the process of class formation to be "central" to understanding the Third World, he recognizes that examples of overt, self-conscious class action in Papua New Guinea are few and ephemeral (Amarshi, Good, and Mortimer 1979:100). Fitzpatrick writes of the "inchoate" and "emerging" character of classes in Papua New Guinea (1980), of the use of "exotic adjectives" to describe them, and ends up using Wright's (1976) idea of "contradictory class locations" to explain why people act inconsistently with the expectations of class analysis. More recent Marxist writing on Papua New Guinea has given greater attention to class action by different factions of the growing indigenous bourgeois class (Stewart 1985; MacWilliam 1986, 1988).

   Given the difficulties of class analysis in Papua New Guinea, why should we bother? Without a methodological predisposition to Marxism, one reason might be the assumption, so familiar that it is hardly spoken, that Papua New Guinea is best understood as a country undergoing a particular kind of historical change: a "young" country, "devel-

oping," and so on (in spite of thousands of years of settlement). Marxism is among other things a theory of historical development and the forces that drive it. Class divisions and class action may become more pronounced as the nation's economy develops (though class analysis of advanced industrial societies is not particularly straightforward either; see Przeworski 1977 on the proliferation of new and intermediate classes).

If Papua New Guinea is "developing," then Bougainville should be of particular interest as among the most advanced provinces. Until the rebellion it had the highest per capita income of the nation's rural provinces (Bird 1984:22), and the mining work force was like a classic nineteenth-century proletariat: skilled, well organized, and concentrated in a single location. At the same time, commercial opportunities provided by the mine have created a small class of Bougainville bourgeois, looking for investment opportunities. So if class action was going to take place anywhere in the country, it would likely be in Bougainville.

If we take a broad definition of "class action" to mean action by groups defined, or defining themselves, in economic terms (particularly in relationship to the means of production), then we might look at several potential groups: the landowners, the mineworkers, and the rebels. Class action need not encompass action only by employees or the disadvantaged. The bourgeoisie has also to organize itself. In Papua New Guinea we need to take into account the existence of an indigenous as well as an international bourgeoisie. We also might look for intellectuals of uncertain class position who seek to heighten class consciousness or to organize class action, and at the "imperialist" role of the Australian government.

However, the initial actors in the Bougainville rebellion--traditional landowners in 1987-1988--do not fit easily into a class analysis based, like Marxism, on a labor theory of value. To the extent that they survive on rental and compensation payments, they are parasitic on the labor of the mineworkers (though in practice few landowners would be completely dependent on such income). As MacWilliam has argued (1988), to the extent that their income is concentrated and invested through such institutions as the RMTL (Road Mine Tailings Leases) Trust, which invested in plantations, they are, or hope to become, bourgeois.

Relationships between Race, Ethnicity, and Class

In looking for relationships, we first need to sharpen the focus on conflict. Ethnicity need not necessarily involve conflict. Ethnic groups may

be happy to "live and let live," their hostility reserved for backsliders among their own ranks rather than for other ethnic groups.

Modern "race" seems more intrinsically conflictual. It has often involved the involuntary categorization of one group by another (though members of the categorized group may be sufficiently intimidated, or brainwashed, into accepting the categorization, at least for a while). In the weak form of class, differences in income, wealth, or status are not necessarily conflictual (though may give rise to resentment if they seem unjustified). In the strong Marxist form, however, class differences are inherently conflictual: more wages means fewer profits and vice versa.

Treating race and ethnicity together, six possible relationships can be distinguished between them and class: (1) that, historically, racial/ethnic forms of organization are being replaced by class forms; (2) that race/ethnicity may conceal, but are fundamentally subordinate to, class; (3) that race/ethnicity may express class; (4) the reverse, that class (or at least economic claims) may disguise racial/ethnic claims; (5) that they simply overlap; and (6) that race/ethnicity provide the selective incentives required to overcome free-riding on collective action.

The first goes back to where we began: the persistence and revival of racial and ethnic forms of organization tends to disprove it. Weber distinguished between class and status groups, and expected that identification with status (such as ethnicity) would be more salient in times of economic stagnation and identification with class more salient in times of economic change.

> When the bases of acquisition and distribution of goods are relatively stable, stratification by status is favoured. Every technological repercussion and economic transformation threatens stratification by status and pushes the class situation to the foreground. Epochs and countries in which the naked class situation is of predominant significance are regularly the periods of technical and economic transformations. And every slowing down of the change in economic stratification leads, in due course, to the growth of status structures, and makes for a resuscitation in the important role of social honour. (Weber, quoted in Hechter 1976:1166)

Hechter argues that his own research on industrialization and the Celtic fringe in British politics tends to disprove the Weberian hypothesis, though Cross (1978) has restated it in a more complex way, which

accounts for decolonization in the Caribbean. For Papua New Guinea the efflorescence of ethnic sentiments in such an economically changing society as Bougainville suggests that there is no simple historical transition from race/ethnicity to class.

The second is a kind of classic Marxist formulation. Fitzpatrick expressed it directly in relation to Papua New Guinea: "racial and ethnic divisions are seen in the present work as subordinate to class division. It is perverse to assert the dominance of race and ethnicity when the purpose of the maintenance of these divisions is to contain class formation" (1980:18). This formulation seems to me too closed. The reference to "purpose" is functionalist: the purposes are presumably those of the economically dominant class, but there remain questions about how they recognize each other and their common interests. Even then there may be disagreements about how those purposes might best be served (and they may get it wrong). The notion of subordination also suggests a traditional Marxist model of "base" determining "superstructure" that may not accept the possibility of complex and reciprocal determinations between them.

Rex's formulation of the third position opens up an opposite possibility, that ethnic identity provides a ready-made framework of feeling for class action: "the existence of common ethnicity of a primordial kind gives the class-in-itself (i.e., the group with the same relation to the means of production) an immediate basis for action" (1986:80). This, for example, would explain the demonstrations by BCL employees in November 1988, justifying a class claim (about housing) in terms of racial discrimination.

The fourth position is suggested by Smith (1981): that some groups pursuing ethnic political purposes may put their demands in an economic form to gain wider legitimacy for them. It seems to be a possibility not worth excluding by definition, A strong version of this (for example, among some Fijian nationalists) would discount claims to multiracialism or class action as covers for the interests of particular racial groups.

The fifth position is that the relationship between class and ethnic action is merely contingent: a matter of overlap, coincidence, or opportunity. They are different bases for organization but not necessarily linked through disguise, mystification, or subordination. However, such disaggregation leaves us with the problem of explaining what ethnic and racial groups might be fighting about: mere "difference" seems a little limp as an explantation. As Wolpe asks: "How is it possible to conceive of race as an 'independent basis' for the acquisition of political and

economic power without specifying the conditions (including the structures of political and economic power) which make it possible for race to operate in this way?" (1986:115).

The sixth position responds to the weakness of disaggregating the concepts by introducing ideas of competition and material interests. In the rational-choice model of ethnicity, discussed above, people choose from potential available identities those that will maximize their interests: if a group of them do it, then that presumably corresponds to class action. However, as Olson has pointed out, such a group will be subject to a collective action problem: it will be in each member's individual interests *not* to act, on the assumption that he or she may free-ride on the actions of others (Olson 1965; Elster 1986:129-139).

"Ethnicity" may provide the emotional ties and fear of shame--what Olson called the "selective incentives"--that overcome such opportunism. Hechter takes the argument further. As well as providing the private rewards and punishments that induce people to participate in larger-scale action, ethnic organizations also provide a means of controlling the information on which individual rational choices are made (for example, by overestimating the chances of success, by suppressing consideration of alternative courses of action, and by presenting opponents as more wicked and calculating than they really are). Ethnic organizations may also contribute to the formation of preferences that guide rational action (Hechter 1986:271).

Relationships with the State

Race and ethnicity are sometimes used to make special claims for state resources, just as governments may use race and ethnicity as a basis for granting or witholding jobs and services. Fitzpatrick sees "law and state" maintaining ethnic divisions to contain class formation (1980). The theorists of the "invention of tradition" also give an important role to the state in shaping ethnic identifications.

The concepts have different relationships to ideas about the state. Ethnicity, as Smith argues, is not necessarily a political concept (1986), though the modern ideology of "ethnonationalism," defined by Connor (1973, 1987), asserts that every ethnic group has the right to a state of its own. Race, and particularly racism, more clearly involve relations of power and subordination. They need not necessarily involve the state (bully boys can enforce racism), but the processes of categorization and exclusion that are characteristic of racism are well adapted to the apparatus of the modern administrative state.

The relationship between class and state has been the subject of a

flowering of recent Marxist analysis, turning particularly on the notion of the "relative autonomy" of the state and of state officials from the immediate demands of the economically dominant bourgeoisie. The relative autonomy of the state and--more generally--of political from economic relations provides one route to a nonreductionist Marxist theory of race and ethnic relations.

Rational-choice theories also have much to say about the role of the state, for example, as an arbitrator in a whole class of situations called "prisoners' dilemmas," whereby individually rational behavior is collectively disastrous. Racial and ethnic claims often lead to unintended, suboptimal outcomes: if one group makes an ethnic claim, it may do well; but if every other group does the same, they all end up worse off. Lebanon provides a model.

We can begin to see how state activity influences, and is influenced by, race and ethnicity through the familiar argument that state elites use ethnicity to divide and rule their populations. Three theories extend this argument in ways that seem relevant to Papua New Guinea. Each is a kind of rational-choice theory, or at least it assumes that state elites or (in the third case) aspirant elites use ethnic claims to promote their own interests.

Laitin's "Ancestral Cities"

In an argument about alternative bases of political cleavage, Laitin describes how the British in Nigeria deliberately revived and promoted political identification with ancestral cities, while actively discouraging the politicization of religious antagonisms between Christians and Muslims. These identities have persisted into independence. Laitin's surveys show that while Christians have much greater economic opportunities than Muslims, religion has not been politicized. People feel that "ancestral city identification is real, whereas religious identification is not" (Laitin 1985:299).

Arguing against primordial and rational-choice theories of ethnic identity, Laitin concludes that such identities are neither completely "given" nor completely "chosen," but powerfully shaped (though perhaps not completely invented) by state action. In relation to Papua New Guinea, Laitin's argument suggests attention to the bases of division recognized and promoted by government officials and--in particular-- the intersection of religious and other bases of identification. Catholicism, for example, is often cited as a basis for Bougainvillean identity and resistance to central government officials.

Enloe's "'State-Building Formulas"

Enloe argues that ethnicity is not just a "concoction of manipulative elites" (1978), but can be understood as an instrument of state building; that is, a means for ensuring that the state is centralized, coordinated, and relatively autonomous of the society the state elite seeks to govern. By a process of international comparisons, she identifies several distinct "state-building formulas" that use ethnicity in various ways. The familiar tactic of "divide and rule" is only one such formula. Others are: displacement, as when marginal, typically indigenous groups are pushed into the interior or highlands; internal colonialism, in which members of the dominant ethnic group are posted to rule other groups, whose own elite is co-opted into junior positions in the state hierarchy; and assimilation, when elites allow access to the bureaucracy, but usually on condition that applicants adopt their ethnic values.

As in Howard's account of ethnicity and the state in the South Pacific (1989), Enloe treats "divide and rule" as a tactic of weak, but not necessarily colonial, states. It is one also followed after independence, though the state's inability to penetrate and mobilize the divided society means that it may be disproportionately dependent on foreign aid. Papua New Guinea seems a typical case.

Ballard's "Official Construction"

Ballard extrapolates from colonial policy in Nigeria to Papua New Guinea that colonial administration may serve to constitute ethnic identity as well as reflect it (1978). I would extend his argument about ethnicity and access to a simple, rational-choice model of how ethnicity is reproduced, as follows. The establishment of a district headquarters, later becoming a small town, tended to privilege the group on whose land the center was built. The perception of uneven development created feelings of resentment among those who now found themselves distant from the new centers of power. They then turn secessionist, seeking a separate administrative unit and in particular a central place of their own. The process may repeat itself on an ever smaller scale. A neat example is the following argument by a university student supporting a separatist movement in the eastern Highlands in 1983.

> [T]he argument that there is less development in the eastern
> half of the province than the western, for which the provincial
> government has been partly blamed, is just one issue that has

> fuelled separatist politics . . . there were obvious aspects of favoritism . . . in the provincial government . . . most senior and key ministries were given to Goroka leaders while the junior ministries went to Kainantu leaders . . . people want to run their own area with their own ideas, knowledge and customs. (Ayamaso 1983)

Ayamaso's complaint could be applied word for word to a number of provinces or countries with only a change of proper names. It describes a strategy for an aspirant elite, wanting a state of its own.

Conclusions

Several accounts--from Van den Berghe's sociobiology to Howard's Marxism--emphasize the need to periodize any theory of race and ethnicity. Groups may have always distinguished themselves by ethnic markers, but "race" particularly has become more salient in the modern context of intercontinental migration that has been both driven by and resulted in sharpened competition for land and jobs.

An emphasis on history is also supported from a different direction by Anthony Smith's arguments about the role of historical myths in the formation of ethnic groups. Thus Bougainvillean stories of oppression by security forces are likely to join other elements in shaping a sense of a separate Bougainvillean identity. As elsewhere (for example, Northern Ireland) the repression of ethnic expression becomes its most powerful reinforcement.

In Papua New Guinea a focus on the relationship between migrant and settled populations and competition for land and work helps explain why ethnic and racial conflict is more prevalent in some parts of the country (such as Bougainville, Morobe, or the National Capital District) than in others. If we follow a Popperian philosophy of science, a good theory should be falsifiable, and a theory based on migration and competition predicts that ethnic and racial conflict will be less elsewhere. Thus, in policy terms, secessionism may not be quite the virulent disease that Senator Evans, quoted at the beginning of this article, has suggested.

As well as looking to history, there is probably a need to develop a "regional" theory of the politics of race and ethnicity for the South Pacific. Just as theories of race relations developed in the United States are different from those accounting for the Caribbean or Latin America or the position of racial minorities in postwar Europe, so we need to

take into account the historical and geographical circumstances of the South Pacific, whose "regional" character is partly accounted for by similar experiences of incorporation of small political systems into wider colonial states, weak administrative penetration, slow economic growth, long-distance labor migration, and the persistence of precontact forms of organization and belief, which can be invoked and reconstructed to suit current political purposes.

While theories about the politics of race and ethnicity must take into account historical and geographical contexts, they must also make sense at the level of the individual and the group. We should not take the existence of racial or ethnic groups as given: they must be created, recognized, and sustained by collective action. So we need to ask why people join ethnic groups, and why they leave them, and why they sometimes reject "race" or "ethnicity" as a basis for organization, preferring something else.

What selective benefits and sanctions are needed to keep groups together? Again there is a historical dimension, as ethnic choices are presumably more easily available in mines, towns, and plantations than in the village in which you were born. However, collective action problems are perennial; they offer a different kind of explanation from those offered by history and anthropology. We should not assume a simply "corporate" character for traditional life, without conflict between individuals and conflict between individual and collective aspirations. To do so would be to concede to the mythology of race and ethnicity that we were all "one people" back then.

NOTE

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