WALLERSTEIN'S WORLD-SYSTEMS THEORY AND THE COOK ISLANDS: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

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Wallerstein developed world-systems theory as an attempt to correct the inadequacies he saw in the development orthodoxy of the 1950s and the 1960s--the modernization school (Skocpol 1982: 1075). In common with many other dependency theorists, Wallerstein defined his theory of development (and underdevelopment) in opposition to modernization theory in two critical ways. First, whereas modernization theory tended to examine nations as discrete and independent units, world-systems theory made the interstate context of development its main source of explanation: A nation developed the way it did because of its position on the world-system (Wallerstein 1974:351). Although Wallerstein incorporated national and subnational factors into world-systems theory (particularly his more recent versions), these remained in a subordinate role as intervening variables. Second, Wallerstein stressed the importance of historical factors in development. In his first book on the world-system he said that he wished to avoid the "intellectual dead-end of ahistorical model-building" (presumably a reference to modernization theory) and claimed that it was possible to build a universal theory of development on the analysis of the specific histories of individual nations (Wallerstein 1974:338).

This article examines world-systems theory in the light of Wallerstein's claims for its validity and usefulness by using information collected on the Cook Islands. I will attempt to show that world-systems theory overemphasizes the global context of development, misinterprets

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the historical evidence, and falls far short of an adequate understanding of the forces that shape the development of the nations of the world. I will briefly outline world-systems theory, discuss the history of the Cook Islands since European contact, and provide a critique of world-systems theory both as it relates to a Pacific microstate like the Cook Islands and as a general theory of (under)development.

World-Systems Theory: A Broad Outline

Wallerstein's *Modern World-System I,* published in 1974, is a theoretically ambitious work. According to Wallerstein, world-systems theory, roughly outlined in this book, provides a major breakthrough in the explanation of the origin and the dynamics of the capitalist world-system. Such claims have not gone unchallenged, however, and Wallerstein has been subject to serious criticism from a variety of sources (Skocpol 1982; Janowitz 1982). More recent books and articles published by Wallerstein reflect this to some extent; he develops world-systems theory further--sometimes refining it, sometimes altering it in a more substantial manner. In this section I attempt to broadly sketch an outline of the theory as it stands at the moment.

According to Wallerstein the world-system arose in Europe either in the late fifteenth century or early in the sixteenth century. The system was (and is) held together by exploitation, and had the result of polarizing the nations of the earth into two main groups: the core and the periphery. An intermediate position, the semiperiphery, was also created. Wallerstein's model rests on the assumption that the forces that caused this polarization to occur in Europe in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries continue to operate on a global level in the late twentieth century.

Polarization began when initial "edges" in the marketplace were transformed into major advantages. If, "at a given moment in time, because of a series of factors at a previous time, one region had a slight edge over another in terms of one key factor, and there [was] a conjuncture of events which [made] this slight edge of central importance in terms of determining social action, then the slight edge [was] converted into a large disparity and the advantage [held] even after the conjuncture [had] passed" (Wallerstein 1974:98). For a number of reasons advantage could be cumulative: A point could be reached where strength[1] created more strength[2] (Wallerstein 1980a:40, 288; Wallerstein 1974:356). Crucial to the ability of a nation to take advantage of any edge created in the marketplace, and to begin an upward spiral

from strength to strength, was the nature of its internal class structure. If the class structure allowed the development of a strong state, then the state could act on the behalf of its dominant economic groups in the world market to reinforce the nation's advantage. "Within a world-economy, the state structures function as ways for particular groups to affect and distort the functioning of the market. The stronger the state machinery, the more its ability to distort the world market in favour of the interests it represents" (Wallerstein 1979:61).

The creation of a strong state coupled with a national culture enabled core nations to protect the disparities that had arisen in the world-system (Wallerstein 1974:349). They were able to do this either through diplomacy, war, or subversion (Wallerstein 1982:41). A core nation was thus able to dominate a peripheral region and extract surplus from it. According to Wallerstein the polarization of nations and states created by this extraction was and is necessary for the maintenance of the system as a whole (Wallerstein 1974:354-355).

The peripheral regions were unable to prevent the transfer of surplus to the core because they had states that were weak relative to core states --this weakness stemmed from their lack of resources and their inability to unite internal interests (Wallerstein 1982:40). In most cases peripheral states actually facilitated such transfers. While core states had a certain degree of autonomy concerning their internal economic interests (Wallerstein 1974:355), the same could not be said of peripheral states. They may have been nonexistent, as in colonial situations, or barely autonomous at all, as in neocolonial situations (Wallerstein 1974:349). In either case the states in the periphery could be seen as operating in the interests of the core (Wallerstein 1980b:82).

The strength of core states with respect to peripheral states, coupled with the greater efficiency of core producers with respect to peripheral producers, gave rise to a geographical division of labor. Under this division of labor the core nations produced the goods for which labor was most highly rewarded and the peripheral nations produced the goods for which labor was less well rewarded. This division of labor magnified "the ability of some groups within the system to exploit the labour of others, that is, to receive a larger share of the surplus" (Wallerstein 1974:349). Once established the division of labor reinforced the polarization of the nations within the world-system and enabled the core to develop at the expense of the periphery through unequal exchange on the world market.

As noted earlier the semiperiphery lies between the core and the periphery. It is a core with respect to the peripheral zones and a periph-

ery with respect to the core zones. Wallerstein points out that the semi-periphery is not "an artifice of statistical cutting points, nor is it a residual category. The semi-periphery is a necessary structural element in a world-economy." It is necessary because it is able to "partially deflect the political pressure which groups primarily located in peripheral areas might otherwise direct against core-states," thus maintaining the world-system (Wallerstein 1974:349-350). Eventually, however, the contradictions in the world-economy will become too significant to be eased and a radical shift will occur. Wallerstein anticipates the formation of a world socialist government in the twenty-first or twenty-second century (Wallerstein and Hopkins 1982:139).

As the world-system developed it expanded into areas previously external to itself (Wallerstein 1980b:80). As these "external arenas" were incorporated into the system the commodities produced by them, originally part of the "rich trades," became a necessary part of the world-economy. Using Wallerstein's typology they became "peripheral zones" (1980a: 109). Two main changes occurred to regions on incorporation. First, there were changes in the form of government. Where a centralized state was lacking it was created, enabling the conditions necessary for surplus extraction to be guaranteed--for example, the enforcement of contracts (Wallerstein 1980b:81). Second, a transformation occurred in the processes and goals of organization. Production was increased by various means[3] and ceased to focus on goods with a high use-value to the producers, shifting instead to goods with a high exchange-value on the world market. According to Wallerstein and Hopkins this process of incorporation caused in every case the "more or less rapid, more or less extensive decline in the material well-being of the population in the area from what it had been" (Wallerstein and Hopkins 1982:129).

A Brief Political and Economic History of the Cook Islands

The history of the Cook Islands since European contact contains, as we shall see, elements that both support and undermine Wallerstein's theory. European exploration of the Pacific began with the Spanish and the Dutch. Although the Dutch ventured into the South Pacific their sphere of influence centered on the Indonesian archipelago and the neighboring seas. The Spanish focused their attentions on the Americas (Morrell 1963:4). As the fortunes of these nations waned the French and the British began to increase their activities in the South Pacific. Their battle for supremacy in Europe played itself out in the external arenas and the peripheral zones of the world, including the Pacific. As Britain was ris-

ing to fill the position of hegemony left vacant by the United Provinces of Holland in Europe, it became dominant in the Pacific. Following in the footsteps of the explorers were the traders and the whalers. A growing trade in vegetables, fruit, pigs, poultry, and firewood developed (Crocombe 1960:2). Also entering the Pacific at this time were the missionaries, most of them associated with the London Missionary Society. The missionaries had a significant role to play in the Pacific and the Cook Islands was no exception.[4]

According to Gilson the dependency of the Cook Islanders on cash crops and overseas trade that developed during the mid-1800s was mainly due to the establishment of local missionary societies.[5] Although the field staff of the London Missionary Society "were instructed to make the Polynesians as self-reliant as possible within a limited range of new economic needs," the missionary and explorer John Williams and his colleagues did not agree with this policy. As they saw it "not only was trade bound to develop with the whalers and merchant ships already calling at the island, but the people could produce a surplus of marketable goods much more easily than they could spin cotton for example. . . . [Williams] felt that they should be encouraged to produce raw materials to exchange with the mother country for manufactured articles" (Gilson 1980:36).

Whatever the cause, by the mid-1800s European involvement in the Cook Islands was substantial and its society was gradually being incorporated into the world-economy. Howard describes this process as a complex interaction or articulation of the older modes of production with the ever-expanding capitalist mode. He also suggests that the impetus for change and even greater capitalist penetration came from three sources: the Polynesian ruling classes, the missionaries, and the European settlers. "Traditional, or pre-capitalist, elites in particular . . . continued to appropriate economic surplus and resultant political power by mobilizing traditional pre-capitalist productive structures" (Howard 1983:9). Trade was generally organized along lineage lines and controlled by the chiefs, although usually subject to the advice of the missionaries (Crocombe 1960:2). As a result of their control of trade some leading chiefs built large European-style houses furnished in the Victorian style and imported thoroughbred horses and wagons (Crocombe 1960:2; Gilson 1980:51).[6]

By the late nineteenth century the British were consolidating their position in the Pacific. Although reluctant to assume new colonial responsibilities the British declared a protectorate over the southern Cook group in 1888 (Crocombe 1960:2; Gilson 1980:57). In 1891 a Brit-

ish Resident, both appointed and financed by New Zealand, was sent to Rarotonga (Crocombe 1960:2).

There were several reasons for the establishment of a protectorate by the British. In 1865 certain chiefs and British residents of Rarotonga had unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Britain through Sir George Grey to establish a protectorate over the islands (Ross 1964:234). While the benefits for trading relations were of some importance, perhaps of greater significance was the fear that other European powers would attempt to claim the Cook Islands for themselves. The fear of French Catholicism held by the missionaries was also a factor (Douglas and Douglas 1987:37). And in August 1881 the French warship *Hugon* arrived in the Cook Islands. The captain announced that France proposed to establish a protectorate and that all future trade should be with Tahiti and not with Auckland or Sydney (Ross 1964:234). This never came to pass but the incident serves to highlight the nature of European colonial politics in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, from about 1884 onwards New Zealand politicians began to press for the annexation of the Cook Islands. Prior to this their attention had been focused on other Pacific states. "As part of his programme for countering the expansion of Germany and France in the Pacific, Stout [the New Zealand premier] included Rarotonga in the islands which he held Britain should annex forthwith" (Ross 1964:235). Eventually the Colonial Office sided with New Zealand, and Britain finally declared a protectorate over the Cook Islands in 1888.

European influence on the structure of Cook Islands society became more pronounced as the end of the century approached. Frederick Moss, the British Resident, encouraged the chiefs to form a central government. In this he was successful and "the status of the leading chiefs, which had already been enhanced by their religious and commercial contacts, was now further strengthened by their new political powers and functions" (Crocombe 1960:2).

Other changes in the political system were to be achieved through education. Moss believed that democratic self-government would follow naturally from an education in English. "The chiefs accepted Moss's optimistic views with enthusiasm. English language became the *sine qua non* of progress" (Gilson 1980:74). The colonial administration anticipated that educating the islanders would not only result in democracy but also change the social relations of production, allowing productivity to be increased.[7] A high school was opened in 1893 by the London Missionary Society with the administration's support.

During this period the Cook Islanders displayed considerable economic enterprise. The 1890s saw more development of native enterprise

than the group has ever seen since (Bellam 1980a:13; Crocombe 1960: 2). "Native owned and operated schooners traded throughout the Group as well as up to Tahiti and down to New Zealand" (Crocombe 1960:2).

Incorporation into the global economy was not without its cost, however. Local problems of production were difficult enough, but during the 1890s there were also considerable problems associated with changes in the external market. By 1896 cotton production had virtually ceased and the price of coffee had plummeted as a result of Central American competition (Gilson 1980:79-80).

The role of the New Zealand administration in the economic development of the Cook Islands during this period has been much criticized. Bellam, for example, claims that New Zealand was responsible for the underdevelopment of the Cooks (1980a:5). Strickland is even more critical, arguing that a "thick crust of apathy" was forced on the Cook Islands' people "by the strong arm of direct rule, by discouragement of local initiative, by lack of participation in government and by the pent-up feeling against the dictatorial attitude of the Resident Commissioner's [New Zealand] administration" (Strickland 1979:7).[8]

In spite of these problems, or perhaps because of them, New Zealand politicians continued to push for annexation, which was preferred to an ill-defined protectorate (Ross 1964:252). In 1900 Richard Seddon arrived in Rarotonga on a goodwill tour from New Zealand. It was a success because the *ariki* (the senior chiefs) responded by immediately agreeing to the annexation of the Cook Islands by New Zealand (Gilson 1980:99). As Gilson suggests, the annexation cannot be explained solely in terms of Seddon's or the British Resident's imperialist tendencies (Gilson 1980:104). The trade between the two nations was a factor of considerable importance.[9] Ironically, within five years of annexation, indigenous enterprise had virtually ceased (Bellam 1980a:15). Crocombe (1960) suggests that this was due to the leveling of the leadership system on which such enterprise was based.

At this stage it appears that a strong case can be made that New Zealand caused the underdevelopment of the Cook Islands. As the concept of exploitation and underdevelopment is central to Wallerstein's thesis I shall examine these issues in greater detail.

The Dependency of the Cook Islands

The dependence of the Cook Islands on New Zealand aid has been attributed to various causes. The most commonly cited relate to the land tenure system, the problems associated with irregular and expen-

sive shipping, and, more recently, the "MIRAB" set of phenomena (Watters 1987; Bertram 1985).

Land tenure in the Cook Islands was traditionally organized around lineages.[10] The colonial administration opposed such a system as "discouraging the application of technology and capital and hence . . . the use of land in commercial agricultural enterprises" (Kelly 1984:44). Nevertheless the Cook Islanders almost consistently produced more than they could export (Gilson 1980: 156).

In 1902, soon after annexation, a land court was established with jurisdiction over all land matters. "The colonial administration felt that chiefly exploitation was largely responsible for the lack of productivity of islanders as a whole" (Howard 1983:157). Accordingly the power of the chiefs over land was significantly curtailed by the newly formed land court, and chiefly powers to organize production and marketing were either annulled or brought under the control of the Resident (Crocombe 1960:3). Ironically this resulted in a reduction in indigenous enterprise and had enormous consequences for the economic and social development of the Cook Islands. The entrepreneurial base of the Cook Islanders had been undermined (Fairbairn 1987a; see also Crocombe 1964:84). By "1910 it was stated that the power of the chiefs was 'passing away' and that the chiefs were less able to organise group activities than before, as they could no longer compel people to work without pay, and the people were increasingly selling to the highest bidder. The people were hiding their money from their kinsmen and chiefs, usually by burying it" (Gilson 1980: 153). The social system that relied upon the land tenure system was never to be the same again.

Another consequence of the creation of the land courts was that, contrary to local custom, all of a landowner's children inherited from him an equal but undivided share. This has led to the situation where it is not at all uncommon in Rarotonga today for more than one hundred people to hold rights in a single house site. This state of affairs provides a serious deterrent to the planting of long-term crops (Crocombe 1960:7).

Any discussion of the problems associated with shipping in the Cook Islands inevitably brings to the surface some of the ideological debates surrounding development. On the one hand the unsatisfactory nature of shipping in the Cook Islands can be attributed to its location. The islands are small, scattered, and distant from their nearest markets. On the other hand one could argue that the primary cause of the problem is the exploitation of the Cook Islanders by shipping firms that operate exclusively in their own interests.

As noted earlier substantial indigenous control of shipping existed

prior to 1901. Various policy measures introduced by the New Zealand administration, however, appear to have been responsible for a severe reduction in the strength of such indigenous enterprise. With the onset of World War I, and the subsequent drop in the level of exports, the remaining indigenous fruit companies went out of business as indebtedness increased (Gilson 1980:160). By the end of World War I European merchants dominated the export trade.

Losing control of shipping had disastrous consequences for the Cook Islanders. It was not unusual for between a third and a half of the total marketable fruit crop to be left to rot because the only ship available did not provide sufficient cargo space (Gilson 1980: 159). Even when large quantities of produce were successfully exported the indigenous producers did not gain an equal share of the rewards. The benefits of rising exports after 1921 went mainly to European traders as the trading arrangements were heavily weighted in their favor (D. Stone, cited in Kelly 1984:49).

Throughout the 1920s the growers and their representatives continually pleaded for an improvement in shipping arrangements. In 1924 an official reported that the territory was "capable of growing ten times the fruit and tomatoes it produced, if more and faster steamers were put on the trade"; in 1937 S. J. Smith, secretary for the Cook Islands, estimated that "75% of the orange crop of Rarotonga would be wasted that year through the lack of shipping" (Bellam 1980b:18, 19). The problems associated with the transport of produce to external markets earlier this century can hardly be overstated. A parliamentary inquiry discovered that traders had been operating a "ring" to restrict payments to growers and to increase debt bondage. Growers not in debt had difficulty obtaining cargo space (Bellam 1980b:20-23). Compounding these problems was increasing competition for the New Zealand market from growers elsewhere (Kelly 1984:49).

While private shipping firms were able to operate profitably in the Cook Islands for many decades, according to Bellam this is no longer the case. He suggests that only intervention by the New Zealand and the Australian governments has enabled shipping to continue at all (Bellam 1980b:26).

"MIRAB" is another central feature of the recent history of the Cook Islands. It is an acronym coined to describe national economies dependent on *mi*gration, *r*emittances, *a*id, and large *b*ureaucracies. This description applies particularly well to the Cook Islands (Kelly 1984), as we shall see. There, a MIRAB economy had its beginnings at the turn of the century, soon after annexation.[11]

In 1906, when it was realized that the islands were only going to

export a fraction of the volume of produce hoped for, responsibility for the Cooks was transferred from the minister of trade to the minister of justice (Crocombe 1960:3). Whereas prior to 1909 the policy of the New Zealand government was to keep the administration of the islands self-funding, after 1909 this goal was abandoned. Responsibility for the islands over the course of the next twenty-six years then went to three cabinet ministers, all New Zealand Maori, and this meant that "the emphasis was not on rapid economic change, but on welfare and protection" (Crocombe 1960:3). It was believed that social development and welfare would "modernize" the islands and that this would provide the necessary base for independence (Kelly 1984:74-75). Instead the policy entrenched the Cook Islands' dependence upon New Zealand even further: During the early 1960s the New Zealand financial grant finally exceeded receipts from exports.

The welfare emphasis of the administration required an ever-growing bureaucracy. The bureaucracy was mainly staffed by New Zealanders of European descent, especially in the more senior positions, as the indigenous Cook Islanders had been denied sufficient education by Gudgeon, the British Resident, who had closed the high school in the early 1900s.[12] Not until 1954 was a new high school opened in Rarotonga.

In 1965, when the Cook Islands gained political independence, the islands remained firmly integrated in the New Zealand economy, retaining budgetary support and the New Zealand currency. An official publication of the Island Territories Department of New Zealand in the 1950s described the Cook Islands as a tropical province of New Zealand and according to Britton (1982) little has changed in the ensuing decades.

Cook Islanders also retained New Zealand citizenship and free entry into New Zealand. There have been significant losses of population, most pronounced for males aged between fifteen and twenty-nine, resulting in a labor shortage, particularly of skilled workers and tradesmen (Haas 1977:43). "Ease of entry and employment . . . meant the option of obtaining wages up to four times the rates operating in the Cook Islands" (Kelly 1984:96). Other factors also encouraged high migration levels: the lure of new experiences, access to better educational opportunities in New Zealand, and availability of jobs toward which Western education has molded the aspirations of young Cook Islanders (Kelly 1984:96).[13] Loomis also cites the land tenure system and the limited economic opportunities in the Cook Islands (1986). Associated with such migration is the remittance of money back to the Cook Islands (see Loomis 1986; Kelly 1984).

A decade after "independence," New Zealand's policy on assistance to the Cook Islands underwent considerable change. "Assistance was henceforth intended to foster economic sovereignty as the desirable accompaniment of political self-government" (Kelly 1984: 1). It was realized that previous policies designed to establish the conditions for "modernization" had merely resulted in increased dependence.

There were, however, sizable difficulties to be overcome (Fairbairn 1987a). The most important of these was the declining activity of the productive sector. By 1977 the New Zealand minister of foreign affairs, Brian Talboys, was questioning the Cook Islanders' commitment to achieving self-reliance in light of the continuing decline in agricultural output (Kelly 1984:150). One of the options considered to increase productivity was to reduce the size of the bureaucracy, which by 1984 had become responsible for the employment of 39 percent of the Cook Islands' population active in the cash economy. This, however, would have been more likely to result in increased migration than in increased productivity (Kelly 1984:160). It is unlikely that agricultural production in the Cook Islands will ever rise substantially while the ties of the "special relationship" with New Zealand are maintained.

An alternative to agricultural production as a source of national income was provided by the tourist industry. Tourism had become a major source of revenue for the Cook Islands, second only to aid from New Zealand (Milne 1985:145). Perhaps not surprisingly, "the prime initiators of tourism development were . . . external and local European interests, primarily New Zealand companies and expatriates" (Britton 1982:353), and "foreign and European ownership dominate the key sectors within the tourist industry" (Milne 1985: 114). Obviously tourism is a highly ambiguous development strategy (Britton 1982:333). "The Cook Islands' historical dependence on New Zealand has been . . . continued if not heightened by the growth of tourism" (Milne 1985: 107).

World-Systems Theory and the Cook Islands

Relating this discussion back to Wallerstein's world-systems theory, we would expect the relationship between the Cook Islands (a peripheral nation),[14] Britain (a core nation), and New Zealand (a semiperipheral nation) to be primarily characterized by economic exploitation. While there is evidence that could be used to support this view it can only be sustained by understating the importance of other factors. The New Zealand government may have annexed the Cook Islands with the

expectation of economic gain,[15] but within a few years welfare and other goals increased in importance and began to dominate. Even the British appeared to become interested in the Cook Islands for mainly strategic reasons.

It is the existence of these other factors that undermines the ability of world-systems theory to adequately explain the modern history of the Cook Islands. In this sense world-systems theory suffers from the same problems as all universal theories dominated by a single logic (Rapkin 1981). Wallerstein bases world-systems theory on his understanding of the dynamics of global economic forces. Although political and even cultural factors are referred to on many occasions (Wallerstein 1974: 349-354; Wallerstein 1980b:80-85), Wallerstein's model of development remains economically deterministic. This criticism has been lodged by a number of writers including Skocpol (1982), Levy (1981), and Rapkin (1983).

In some ways Wallerstein's model appears to fit the evidence quite closely. Wallerstein explains the geographical expansion of the world-system that occurred from the 1600s onward as resulting from the need for raw materials and markets (Thompson 1981a:12). And the ability of a nation to explore and incorporate external arenas is assumed to be largely conditioned by its strength with respect to other core states. This certainly appears to have been the case in the Pacific. World-systems theory would also predict the creation of a central state in a peripheral zone where one was previously nonexistent. In the case of the Cook Islands this began with the missionaries and continued under the colonial administration.

But on closer examination the inadequacies are clearly revealed. For example, Wallerstein's assertion that incorporation inevitably causes a decline in the material well-being of the population of an external arena does not appear to have been borne out in the Cook Islands. Neither does the assumption that a peripheral state is unavoidably and permanently weak in relation to a core or semiperipheral state (Short 1987). In fact the Cook Islands has two sources of strength vis-à-vis New Zealand.

First, the Cook Islands are of strategic importance to New Zealand and the Western alliance. The importance of this for aid is discussed by Sevele (1987). Second, the New Zealand government is well aware that any decrease in aid may result in a flood of migrants to New Zealand, all of whom would be eligible for unemployment benefits, subsidized education and health care, and so forth (Kelly 1984: 166). It would be consistent with world-systems theory to suggest that the real reason for the continued support of the Cook Islands by New Zealand is that such

support is functional for the system as a whole, and for New Zealand in particular. According to Wallerstein the peripheral zones are not allowed to go completely under in a time of recession because they will still be needed in the upswing in the world-economy (Wallerstein 1980a:129).

According to world-systems theory the state that developed in the Cook Islands would ideally (for capitalist interests) have been strong enough to ensure conditions favorable for surplus extraction. Wallerstein's model is premised on the assumption that comprador states exist in the periphery, acting on behalf of the core and seeking to maximize their own financial well-being in the process. This aspect of his model fits particularly well with the rule of the chiefs in the second half of the nineteenth century. The state that developed after this, however, whether colonial or "independent," always lacked either the strength to extract significant levels of surplus or the will to do so.[16] To ensure adequate rates of surplus extraction the state would have had to increase productivity. Prior to the emergence of the MIRAB economy this could have been achieved by changing the land tenure system and by allowing ownership of economically viable blocks of land by foreign interests. Neither of these changes occurred to any significant extent (Crocombe 1964:83). It can be argued that the administration did not act forcefully initially because it assumed that the Cook Islanders were dying out and that land would eventually become available for settlement (Crocombe 1964:97, 102). But the point remains that the state was too weak to make anything happen by itself (see Crocombe 1964:83-84, 104; Kelly 1984). In any case, by 1915 the whole approach taken by New Zealand to the Cook Islands had changed. The Cook Islands Government Act of 1915, for example, was "based on the recognition of land as the essential basis of Maori life" (Crocombe 1964:105) and, according to Lewis, the administration created its land tenure laws with the express purpose of protecting indigenous land rights despite the consequences for productivity levels (Lewis 1988:30).

A General Evaluation of World-Systems Theory

A more general critique can also be made. World-systems theory relies for its validity on its analysis of the mechanisms underlying (under)development. For the theory to have any predictive value, one of its central aims (Wallerstein and Hopkins 1982:141), the key processes outlined in the theory must be shown to be essential (or, at the least, highly probable) elements of social life. Failing this the mechanisms relied

upon must at least be demonstrated to have some measure of "fit" with those revealed through empirical research. Wallerstein's model, however, can be shown to be both conceptually flawed and historically inaccurate.

It is conceptually flawed in that its central mechanism collapses if the world is able to continue in a form similar to that it takes now, without polarization on a world scale occurring between strong states and weak states and between rich nations and poor nations. This, as I shall argue, is quite conceivable (see also Warren 1973).

Wallerstein is quite correct in assuming that unequal exchange alone is not a sufficient mechanism for sustaining polarization. If the possibility is allowed that state intervention could prevent the extraction of surplus on a global scale, then the system would collapse (Wallerstein 1974: 344-355). It is necessary for Wallerstein to overcome this difficulty by assuming that political and military power will be used to enforce extraction from the periphery to the core. While this may have been the case prior to the establishment of the League of Nations (and even the importance of such factors prior to that is open to question), it is insufficient to explain developments in the twentieth century.

Wallerstein's theory has survived into the late 1980s in spite of these weaknesses, and this is probably due in no small part to its flexibility. While world-systems theory requires continuing polarization on a global scale, it does allow for individual nations to rise or fall in power. A semiperipheral nation, for example, may become a core nation. Obviously, if these changes were completely random and unrelated, then polarization would cease to occur. And if every nation could develop at the same time, the world socialist government predicted by Wallerstein might never come into existence.[17] Wallerstein circumvents this problem by asserting that for a nation to improve its position in the world-system it must do so at the expense of the other nations, reinforcing the polarity (1979:100-101; 1980a:179). A clear explanation of the necessity of this is not provided.

Another possible reason for the resilience of world-systems theory is its simplicity. As with other functionalist theories it relies on a biological analogy. The social system in question is compared to an organism (Wallerstein 1974:347). The demonstration of relations between the members of a group, however, does not in itself constitute proof of the existence of a "system."[18]

Even if the existence of a world-system can be demonstrated, this is not sufficient reason to believe that the system has needs or goals. One accusation that can be leveled against Wallerstein is that he often builds

his argument on teleological assertions (Skocpol 1982:1078, 1088; Rapkin 1981:259). It would be superfluous to outline the weaknesses of this form of argument (see Saunders 1981:212-215; Pratt 1978: 117-131).

Wallerstein's model also suffers from an inadequate treatment of history, as this critique based on the evidence from the Cook Islands has hopefully shown. It can be claimed that the Pacific microstates, for reasons peculiar to themselves, are exempt from world-systems theory and that this accounts for the theory's weakness in explaining the development of the Pacific Islands. The claim that Wallerstein has misinterpreted history, however, does not rely exclusively on evidence from the Pacific, or even from the twentieth century (Skocpol 1982). The whole basis of his theory--his analysis of Europe in the seventeenth century and beyond--has also been subject to attack. Rapkin accuses materialist historians in general of ransacking history in an *ad hoc* and incomplete manner (1981: 245). Wallerstein has been no exception.

For many people the real strength of world-systems theory lies in its central theme: The development of a nation is significantly determined by its role in the world-economy. While this is undoubtedly true, Roxborough's cautionary comments on the subject are worth noting: "To assert that one cannot study processes of social change without putting them in their context does not imply that the only important factor is the external context itself. Some radical dependency theorists have at times inclined toward a one-sided emphasis on the determining role of the world-market, and have seen developments within Third World countries as mere reflections of, or responses to, exogenous changes" (1979:25).

For others the driving force behind world-systems theory is its portrayal of exploitation. Wallerstein's model allows them to interpret the dependence of the Cooks as a result of underdevelopment and hence exploitation by New Zealand.[19] Exploitation is not the only possible explanation of the lopsided nature of the Cook Islands' economy, however, Bellam to the contrary (1980a:29); other factors must also be examined. The islands comprising the group are small, have limited resources, and for various reasons lack a significant skilled work force (B. Shaw, cited in Lewis 1988:50). These factors have obviously been of major importance. The MIRAB set of phenomena has also had its part to play.[20]

Some would argue that in spite of all its weaknesses world-systems theory has made an important contribution to the debate on development. It has generated research focusing on important issues and pro-

vided a more sophisticated critique of modernization theory than Frank's work, for example. Although I consider Wallerstein's model to be of dubious value it is unlikely to lose favor in the academic institutions of the Pacific for many years. As Ball points out, no "matter how waterlogged [a theory] is a research program will not sink and have to be abandoned until a better, more buoyant one comes along to replace it" (T. Ball, quoted in Higgott 1983:7).

The limitations imposed by the reliance on theories imported from outside of the Pacific to explain developments within it are increasingly being recognized. Meleisea has humorously portrayed this (1987). Lewis (1988) concludes that none of the theories of capitalist transformation, from dependency and conventional Marxist theories to modernization theories, apply particularly well to the part of the Cook Islands he was studying. The same could be said of world-systems theory.

As Packenham says, "It is possible that we are at one of those junctures of political and intellectual history that cries out for the brilliant theoretical innovator with a talent for creative synthesis. In certain respects the time seems ripe for going beyond the rigid established ideologies and paradigms and establishing more fruitful and compelling new ones" (Robert A. Packenham, cited in Higgott 1983:[ix]). Unfortunately, world-systems theory has been unable to meet the challenge and we will have to look elsewhere for the synthesis required.

NOTES

1. Wallerstein defined strength to include both strength vis-à-vis other states within the world-economy and strength vis-à-vis local political units within the boundaries of the state (1974:355).

2. An initial economic advantage could provide the state with sufficient revenues to create an army, an important component in maintaining dominance (Skocpol 1982:1080; Wallerstein 1974:136).

3. In many cases, for example, colonial authorities imposed a tax on the indigenous population, which they required to be paid in cash. The tax was sanctioned by violence where necessary and was the means by which a sufficient labor force was created to operate mines and plantations.

4. According to Morrell, parts of the Cook Islands in the mid-1800s were near-theocracies. While the chiefs still exercised power, John Williams was in practice the real ruler of the islands. A native police under the control of the missionaries was established to enforce certain moral standards--fornication and smoking, for example, were both punishable offenses (Morrell 1960:280; see also Lewis 1988:17).

5. The role of the missionaries was not deliberate in the sense that they were trying to incorporate the Cook Islands into the world-economy. The missionaries were trying to generate funds to support their operations elsewhere in the Pacific. In fact, the policy of the central administration of the London Missionary Society was to prevent the islanders from becoming dependent on trade. This was for several reasons, not least of which was the possibility that contact with the traders might have weakened the influence of the missionaries.

6. The unequal distribution of the rewards of trade did not necessarily generate dissatisfaction with the chiefs among their followers. The literature on conspicuous consumption suggests that it is quite likely that the members of a clan saw the conspicuous consumption of their chief as a public symbol of their clan's prestige.

7. Moss attempted to create a class of yeomen, a society of peasant farmers independent of obligations to their chief and kin (Crocombe 1964:83).

8. Colonel W. E. Gudgeon, for example, who replaced Moss as British Resident in 1898, believed that "stern authority" was essential in dealings with Polynesians (Crocombe 1964:48).

9. Several New Zealand writers during this period viewed the Pacific as a veritable cornucopia for New Zealand. In 1857, Charles Hursthouse published his book *New Zealand, the Britain of the South,* in which he referred to the proximity of "the thousand Polynesian Islands, slumbering in their summer seas . . . needing only the magic touch of steam to open new worlds to [New Zealand's] commerce" (1857:52). The potential for prosperity inspired Martin F. Tupper to pen the immortal words (quoted in Ross 1964: 53-54) :

> Queen of the South! Which the mighty Pacific
> Claims for its Britain in ages to be. . . .

10. The exact nature of the land tenure system varied from island to island (Crocombe 1964:4; Hecht 1987: 188; Crocombe and Marsters 1987:202).

11. The migration component of MIRAB dates back much further than this, however (Douglas and Douglas 1987:39).

12. Gudgeon believed that there were already too many "educated' islanders and that education merely made the young men dissatisfied with work on the land (their "true work"). He claimed that the Cook Islanders would only be capable of using their education once they had obtained a "stiffening of European blood' through race contact (Gilson 1980:164-173).

13. Writing in 1976, a secretary of education from the Pacific region commented that "because of the smallness of [his] country, employment opportunities [had] been very limited and [would] continue to be so and [would] not cope with all [the] school leavers each year. There [was] work in agriculture and other self-employed activities available--but [the] children [had] been educated to expect to work for others in offices, shops, factories on a permanent basis. There [was] plenty of casual work as orange pickers or plantation workers but people [were] unwilling to work on such a basis, considering it below themselves" (quoted in Dickson 1976:41). A similar situation applies in the Cook Islands. There were difficulties encountered in acquiring labor for fruit picking in the large islands ten years earlier than this (Kelly 1984: 114).

14. Some would argue that the Cook Islands cannot meaningfully be described as a nation at all. Whether or not one accepts this point the thesis that Wallerstein's model does not fit well with the reality of the Cook Islands stands.

15. Initial attempts to increase productivity were most likely motivated by the needs of traders and produce marketers in New Zealand. Later attempts were aimed mainly at reducing the levels of aid required by the Cook Islands.

16. We can only speculate on the nature of the Cook Islands state had the rights of the chiefs to control production been maintained in one form or another.

17. Wallerstein claims that the only alternative to the world-system currently in existence (other than a world empire) is a system operated by a global socialist government. Only the reintegration of the political and the economic realms would enable exploitation to cease and the nations of the world to advance together (Wallerstein 1974:348).

18. See Charles Gore's discussion of the use of functionalist analogies in examining spatial systems (1984), especially pp. 200-210.

19. New Zealand is virtually the sole market for Cook Islands goods. From 1976 to 1979 New Zealand accounted for two-thirds of Cook Islands imports (Fairbairn 1984:57).

20. The fact that New Zealand benefited economically from the arrival of Polynesian migrants does not in itself prove exploitation. To the migrants New Zealand represented an opportunity to experience a better life, both in New Zealand and back in the islands.

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