THE SOLOMON ISLANDS' TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE: PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL SYMBOLISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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The period since World War II has seen former colonies, from the Caribbean to Africa and Asia to the Pacific Islands, emerge as independent nation-states. This trend is part of what has been described as an inexorable drive toward "modernization"--a phenomenon that cuts across the planet's normally pervasive geographical, political, cultural, and economic divisions and has been termed somewhat poetically by David Apter, "the burden of this age" (1965: 1).

Modernization, of course, means different things to different people. For Apter, it involves desire and ability to make self-conscious, systematic, rational choices among potential ends and means. Others emphasize literacy, socioeconomic complexity, administrative efficiency, political democracy, or interpersonal equality.[1] Yet, regardless of one's focus, there is wide agreement that "modernity" can only be accomplished through participation in a nation-state. Thus, Rostow (1960), in his influential book, cited development of an effective centralized national state as essential to the second of his five stages of economic growth.[2] More recently, Clapham described in similar terms the basic problem facing leaders of new Third World nations: "to increase the effectiveness of the state and diminish its fragility, ideally by creating a moral sense of its value and associating other social formations with it" (1985:61).

There is a countervailing tendency, however, to the worldwide drive to "modernize." Many terms have been used to label this tendency: "nationalism," "the national question," or "the problem of nationali-

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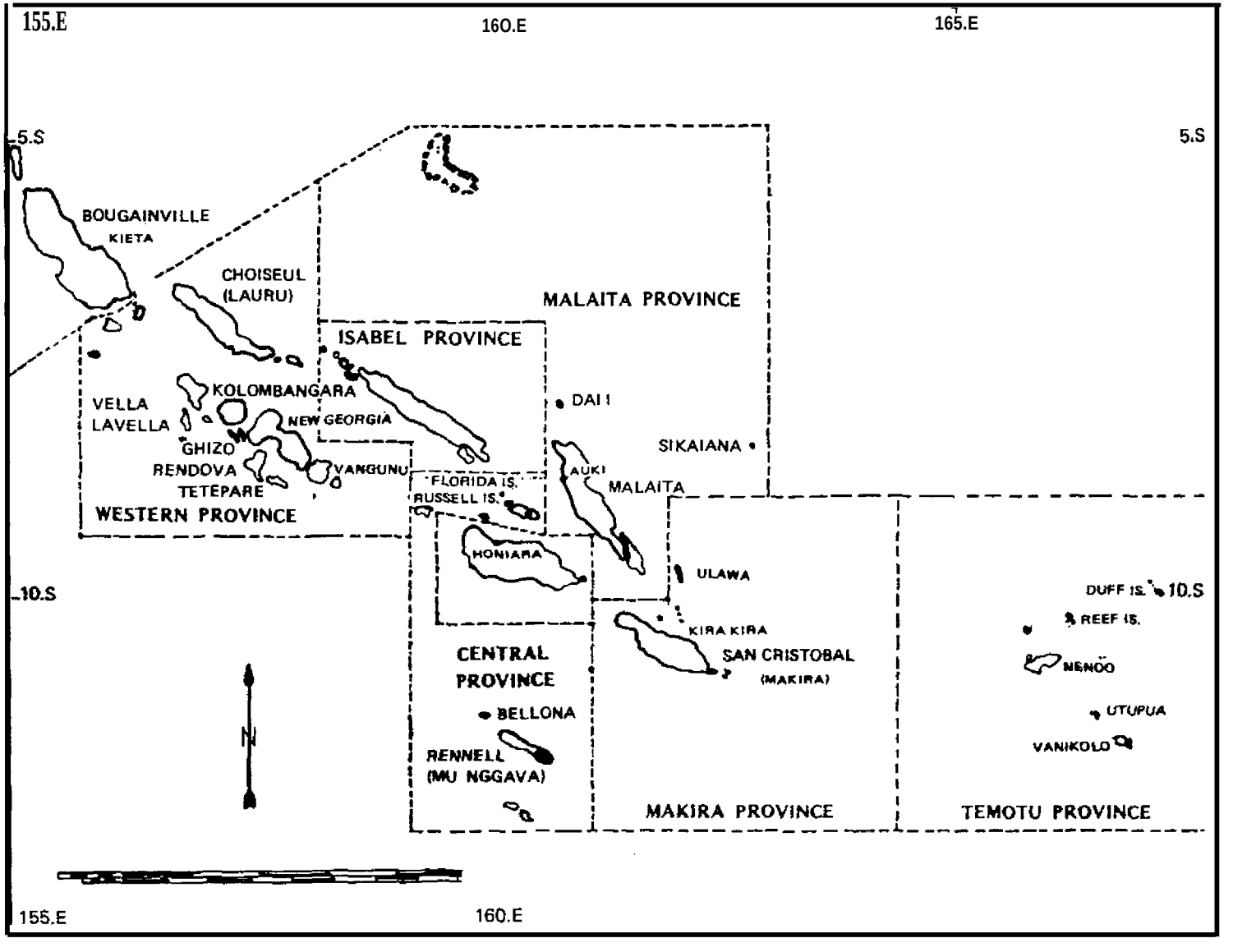

FIGURE 1. The seven provinces of the Solomon Islands, excluding Tikopia and Anuta. (Reprinted from Mae et al. al 1998)

ties" by Marxists (e.g., Lenin 1967:599-653; Trotsky 1967:39-62; Gorbachev, quoted in Tambiah 1989:338); "micro-nationalism" by the functionalist anthropologist Mair (1963: 114-122); "ethnonationalism" or "subnationalism" by Connor (1973) and Premdas, Steeves, and Larmour (1984:37); and "ethnic conflict" by assorted scholars (e.g., Esman 1977; Tambiah 1989). In essence, it involves a sense among some portion of a country's population that it is "a single family with a common identity" (Premdas, Steeves, and Larmour 1984:37). This feeling usually is based upon shared language, culture, religion, or territorial affiliation, which differentiates the group in question from other members of the populace.[3] The feeling of distinctiveness becomes most problematic when such a group perceives the state to be controlled by others who may be indifferent or antagonistic to its interests. When groups feel themselves excluded from the benefits of full participation in the social order, they are likely to demand political autonomy or radical reorganization of the central government. At worst, the government is faced with prospects of dismemberment as the disenfranchised groups make efforts to secede; at best, its claim to moral leadership is compromised.

Such situations have plagued new states around the world and have posed problems even for such powerful and well-established nations as the United States and Soviet Union.[4] For Third World nations, with fewer resources and less well-established governments, the dilemma may seem insurmountable. Elsewhere, I have analyzed this problem from the viewpoint of local communities struggling to maintain a degree of political autonomy within the confines of a recently independent nation-state (see Feinberg 1985, 1986).[5] Here I deal with the same issue, but from the perspective of a central government attempting to instill a sense of national identity in a widely dispersed and heterogeneous population through the manipulation of symbols of national unity. My case in point is the Solomon Islands; the symbols are those associated with the tenth anniversary of national independence, which was celebrated on 7 July 1988.

Solomon Islands: Ethnographic Background

The Solomon Islands is a nation of approximately 300,000 people distributed over several dozen islands, mostly small and dispersed through hundreds of thousands of square miles of ocean. Its hundreds of communities, representing scores of distinct cultures and a plethora of mutually unintelligible languages, have been grouped into seven provinces, each exercising considerable authority over local affairs.[6]

In 1978, after almost a century as a British protectorate, the Solomons became an independent nation.[7] In contrast with much of the postcolonial world, however, it did not achieve independence as a result of a concerted political movement or military struggle.

Elsewhere, independence struggles have been both a blessing and a curse. Anticolonialist movements have been costly in terms of bloodshed and human suffering. On the other hand, they also have served to promote nationalist consciousness among culturally heterogeneous political units. In Geertz's inimitable turn of phrase:

> The granular images into which individuals' views of who they are and who they aren't are so intensely bound in traditional society, were challenged by the more general, vaguer, but no less charged conceptions of collective identity, based on a diffuse sense of common destiny, that tend to characterize industrial states. The men who raised this challenge, the nationalist intellectuals, were thus launching a revolution as much cultural, even epistemological, as it was political. They were attempting to transform the symbolic framework through which people experienced social reality, and thus, to the extent that life is what we make of it all, that reality itself. (1973a: 239)

Later, in the postcolonial period, with the common adversary removed or made less visible, it became apparent that {to quote Geertz once again) "most Tamils, Karens, Brahmins, Malays, Sikhs, Ibos, Muslims, Chinese, Nilotes, Bengalis, or Ashantis found it a good deal easier to grasp the idea that they were not Englishmen than that they were Indians, Burmese, Malayans, Ghanians, Pakistanis, Nigerians, or Sudanese" (1973a:239). Still, the fact of having fought, suffered, and eventually triumphed together could not but have wrought lasting changes in worldview.

Thus, the road to independence for the Solomons had implications for postindependence life as well. Geertz has identified four phases in what he described as "the general history of decolonization." These include "that in which the nationalist movements formed and crystallized; that in which they triumphed; that in which they organized themselves into states; and that (the present one) in which, organized into states, they find themselves obliged to define and stabilize their relationships both to other states and to the irregular societies out of which they arose" (Geertz 1973a:238). Unlike the typical Third World

experience, the Solomon Islands began with the third stage and at present is contending with *both* stages one and four; stage two has never even been on the agenda.

In contrast with the usual euphoria of people on the verge of independence, many Solomon Islanders faced the prospect of being on their own with trepidation; and most of my informants in the early 1970s still clung to the hope that Britain would have a change of heart about leaving. Because of this unusual history, Solomon Islanders were spared the bloodshed that has accompanied achievement of independence in much of the world; but neither were they ever forced to develop a sense of national unity in opposition to a common enemy. This lack of nationalist consciousness was dramatized by Western Province's refusal to participate in the initial independence celebration in 1978.

> On Independence Day, an attempt to raise the Solomon Islands national flag at the police station in the provincial headquarters of Gizo led to a confrontation between Western people and migrants from Malaita, the home island of the prime minister. Three plane-loads of police were flown in to reinforce the police station. The next day, members of the British royal family arrived, fresh from the independence celebrations in Honiara. In welcoming them, the president of the Western Council was careful to limit the symbolism. . . . Union Jacks still flew in Gizo. . . . Western Province was boycotting the Solomon Islands' independence, not declaring its own. (Premdas, Steeves, and Larmour 1984:34)

Premdas and his colleagues list "territory; language, ethnicity, and values; color; and history" among the "fundamental factors" leading to the breakaway movement in the Western Solomons (1984:38-40). The same list of divisive influences could be applied to the country as a whole. As in many parts of Africa and Asia, political boundaries in the western Pacific have more to do with European diplomatic history than with precontact lines of continuity and cleavage.[8] Well over 90 percent of the population is classified as Melanesian. Yet, as the Western Breakaway Movement makes clear, even in the Melanesian segment of the population one finds important differences. In many cases, these seem minor from an outside vantage point. However, from the perspective of Solomon Islanders caught up in what Geertz (1973b), following Shils (1957), has called "primordial" loyalties, they can be gargantuan. When one adds to the Melanesian population the sizable Polynesian,

Micronesian (primarily resettled Gilbertese), Chinese, and European minorities, these differences are much accentuated.

Most people speak local vernaculars as their first language. Children learn English in school, but primary-school teachers are now exclusively Solomon Islanders, many of whom are not entirely proficient in English themselves; thus, most students never learn to speak it well. The country's lingua franca is Solomon Islands Pijin. Although this is less standardized than English, it is an effective medium of oral communication, However, people rarely write in Pijin, and there are few materials published in that language.

Most people live in rural villages and depend on subsistence gardening and fishing for their sustenance. They identify with their kin group, village, region, island, cultural community, or language group; rarely do they think of themselves as Solomon Islanders. This tendency is somewhat less pronounced in Honiara, where people congregate from throughout the islands as they seek education, wage employment, or recreation. Even in town, however, people tend to stay with relatives and *wantoks*--members of the same language community. *Wantoks* tend to live together in the same house or a cluster of houses in the same section of town, to socialize with one another, and to marry among themselves. They often work together and support each other economically, while lines of enmity are often drawn between groups of *wantoks.*[9]

Meanwhile, in the provinces and rural villages, tendencies toward fragmentation may at times be overwhelming. Smaller and more isolated communities believe that they are not receiving the services to which they are entitled, and they are convinced that governmental bodies do not represent their interests. Provinces threaten to secede from the nation.[10] Islands have threatened to secede from the provinces.[11] And some groups such as the Kwaio of Malaita (Keesing 1982) and the Tikopians and Anutans of Temotu Province (Firth 1969; Feinberg 1986) have refused to participate in governmental bodies, vote in elections, or pay taxes.

The number of educated leaders, capable of providing political direction and staffing the public service in the complex modern world, remains small; and most commentators feel that the educational system will not sufficiently increase the pool of skilled and knowledgeable leaders or technicians in the near future. Moreover, to the extent that the educational system *is* successful, it produces an elite whose interests may fail to coincide with those of ordinary villagers.

The government has few of the financial resources necessary to pro-

vide such services as education and medical care, which people expect and on the basis of which the government's performance is evaluated. To a large extent, such services have been provided by the churches--sometimes more effectively than by the government. As a result, the government at times does not even receive credit for its genuine accomplishments.

Dependence on external support for financial solvency places the nation in a poor bargaining position with respect to foreign governments and businesses. The nation has few commercially viable natural resources and little of the industrial base necessary to exploit what it does have.[12]

Small communities are separated by hundreds of miles of open sea; yet shipping is notoriously slow and unreliable. Recently, for example, Lata, the capital of Temotu Province, was without a single ship for six months! Lata is normally serviced twice weekly by a small prop plane from Honiara, but air travel is expensive for transport of passengers and entirely unviable for shipping cargo. Moreover, Lata is sufficiently remote from Honiara that planes must refuel to make the return flight. Without shipping, the fuel supply was soon depleted, and Lata was completely out of contact with the outside world for a month before the government ship was returned to service. Temotu is the most remote of the country's seven provinces, and this is an extreme case. Still, geographical dispersal and transport difficulties have been cited as problems even in the comparatively cosmopolitan Western Province (Premdas, Steeves, and Larmour 1984:35). A series of articles in the March/April 1989 issue of ***LINK*** magazine cites transport as a major national problem, and even Guadalcanal's "Weather Coast," just across the island from the nation's capital, can be very difficult to reach (Solomon Islands Development Trust 1988:4-5).

Other than face-to-face contact, communication is almost exclusively by radio, and in the more remote sections of the country, the signal may be difficult to pick up. Some of the provinces have been equipped with their own broadcasting stations, but these are often out of service. At the time of my July 1988 visit, the Temotu station of the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) had been silent for several months because of financial problems.[13] Brief messages can sometimes be sent by solar-powered shortwave transceivers, but effective communication is limited and difficult. The postal service provides an important medium for contact among people dispersed through the islands, but mail delivery depends on available transport and often is extremely

slow, The few newspapers have little circulation outside of Honiara, the national capital.[14]

In addition to cultural heterogeneity and geographical dispersion, new divisions and new sources of stress have emerged. As in other developing nations, a dichotomy has appeared between the skilled, educated elite who control the government, public service, and economy, and the remainder of the people. Thus far, most of the intelligentsia have retained their ties with families and local villages; but divergence of values, experiences, and interests has been a source of strain. At the same time, genuine socioeconomic classes have developed. Class divisions have been exacerbated by a weak currency; a high cost of living, especially in town; an annual population growth rate of 3.5 percent;[15] and a severe housing shortage. Largely out of problems such as these, a trade union movement has emerged. A major political party, the National Democratic Party (NADEPA), was created as the political arm of the National Union of Workers. At times, strikes have almost paralyzed the country. Indeed, for a while it looked as if the national police might strike during the independence celebration.

Under these conditions, the challenge of creating a sense of national identity can be truly daunting, and the ingenuity of leaders is often taxed. The tenth anniversary of national independence, then, provided an important opportunity for building a sense of unity, and it was not to be missed.

Preparing for the Celebration

Preparations for the celebration began months in advance, and when I arrived in the Solomons in late May, they were well under way. Many of the most able and responsible political leaders and public servants had been relieved of their regular duties in order to devote full time to planning the forthcoming festivities. The main organizing committee consisted of the prime minister's entire cabinet, each province had its own organizing committee, and in Honiara eight major subcommittees were established (Figure 2). The subcommittees were chaired by such important officials as the commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police and the director of the National Museum. This had minimal effect on routine daily functioning of most offices, but policy decisions had to be postponed, and little innovation took place during this period.

The celebration was expected to be the largest single event ever to take place in the new nation, the only comparable occasion being the initial independence celebration in 1978.[16] Sufficient land, therefore,

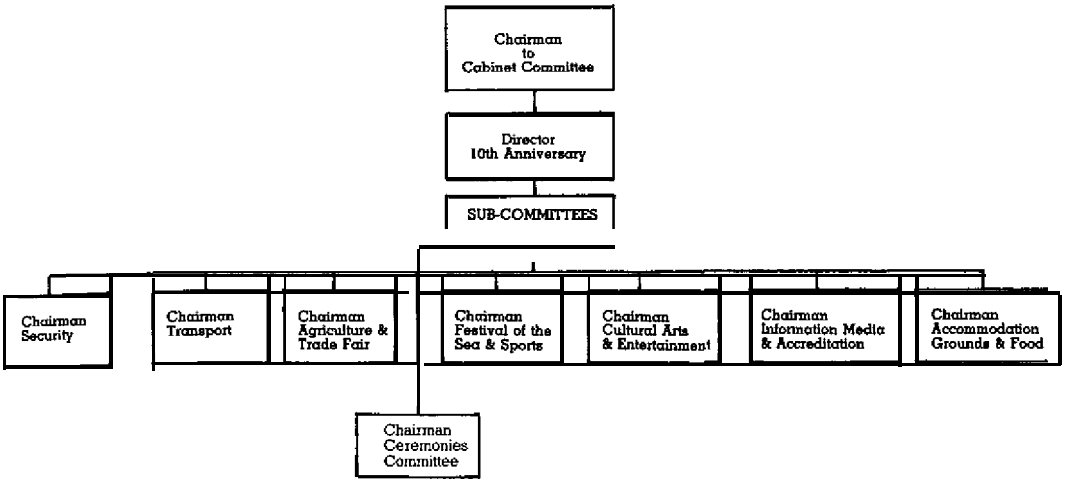

FIGURE 2. Organizational chart of Tenth Anniversary Celebration.
(Reprinted from Mae et al, 1988)

had to be set aside for the activities. Temporary booths, shelters, and toilet facilities had to be constructed. Featured participants from around the Solomons and overseas had to be contacted and their cooperation arranged. They had to be given instructions and transportation organized to get them to Honiara on time for the event. Events had to be scheduled, and judges and prizes arranged for the various contests. Schedules were printed for mass distribution, and radio programming radically rearranged as Independence Week approached.

Not all regular government activity came to a halt during this period, but most did. The most notable exception was the election of a new governor-general. Sir Baddley Devesi, from Guadalcanal Island, had been elected governor-general by the Solomons' Parliament at the time of independence, and the expiration of his term coincided with the tenth anniversary celebration. The governor-general is the queen's official representative, and the office is fundamentally ceremonial. Still, it is regarded as a high honor and a vitally important post. In fact it is, in my experience, the only office taken seriously by most Solomon Islanders regardless of their feelings toward the central government.[17] Thus, the new governor-general's election was given a great deal of attention on SIBC radio and in the celebration. Eight candidates had been nominated for the position, and Parliament needed seven ballots before George Lepping, from the Shortland Islands in Western Province, received the necessary absolute majority. Ceremonies marking the departure of Sir Baddley and installation of Mr. Lepping became a major part of the festivities.[18]

The Celebration

The celebration proved indeed to be a monumental affair. Scheduled activities spanned more than a week, and preparation of the ceremonial grounds took several weeks before that. Banners, colored lights, and other decorations were everywhere. Honiara is extremely overcrowded under normal circumstances with a population of thirty-three thousand, but during the celebration period this figure was expanded by many thousands and the town was bursting at the seams.

Official delegations were sent by every government with which the Solomon Islands has diplomatic relations. One head of state attended--Father Walter Lini, prime minister of Vanuatu. High-ranking officials as well as sports teams, dancers, and musicians from a myriad of nations took part. People from throughout the Solomons poured into Honiara to participate in custom dress and custom dancing competitions, or simply to witness the event.

During the actual period of the celebration, the town was humming with excitement and with the crowds of people filling the streets and ceremonial grounds. Busses and taxis were filled to capacity. All but one bus company took advantage of the opportunity to raise fares to forty cents from thirty-five. (The remaining company, in what will prove either an astoundingly shrewd or astoundingly foolish business move, ***lowered*** its fare to twenty-five cents from thirty.) Most business establishments closed, so the few that remained open could hardly keep up with demand.

Given the buildup and enthusiasm of anticipation, the weather was a major disappointment. July is normally the height of the trade wind season and a relatively dry time of year. Independence Week, however, proved to be an exception. Because of the rain, turnout at many of the sporting events, concerts, and dances was well below expectations. By Tuesday, the rain and crowds transformed Town Ground--the field in which most of the displays and exhibits had been erected--into a sea of mud. Soon, radio announcers were apologizing for the weather, and it looked like the great event would turn into an unmitigated embarrassment. By Thursday, July 7--the actual Independence Day--however, the sun came out, and the official ceremonies at Lawson Tama, a large sports field taken over for the celebration, were held under pleasant skies.

People's Reactions

Obviously, from the foregoing comments, a great deal of money, time, and energy were invested in the activities of Independence Week.

What, then, were the results? Did it help to create a sense of identification with the Solomon Islands and acceptance of the central government's legitimate authority, as had been hoped? In short, was this a sound investment? I posed these questions to many islanders over the next several weeks. My informants ranged from some of the highest government officials and public servants to people who had virtually no understanding of what government is about. They ranged from highly educated people with an outstanding command of English to outer islanders who spoke little Pijin. Because of my long association with Anuta, a Polynesian community in Temotu Province, a disproportionate number of my informants were from that island, making my sample less than random. However, my contacts also included people from all sections of the country.[19] As might be expected, responses were--to say the least--mixed.

The celebration's theme--echoing a call from the then Western District in the days leading to independence (Premdas, Steeves, and Larmour 1984:41)--was something like "unity in cultural diversity." Expressing cultural diversity were custom songs and dances with people dressed in traditional costumes from throughout the islands. The fact that they were all together, performing under the auspices of the government at the Tenth Anniversary of Independence Celebration, expressed the theme of unity. Even such holdout areas as Kwaio and Tikopia participated in the custom dancing!

Unity also was expressed in other ways. Sports teams composed of people from diverse islands and language groups competed as a unit against similar teams from other countries. Unity as a Christian nation was repeatedly expressed through blessings and invocations, hymns and prayers at official functions. On Independence Day, the archbishop of Melanesia led a hymn and blessed the flag just before the prime minister began his address to the nation. Booths at the Town Ground Trade Fair had several religious displays. And the emphasis was continually on ecumenism rather than sectarian differences.

Unity was expressed vis-à-vis other countries by talking about the Solomon Islands' place in the community of nations and accepting delegations from a wide array of foreign governments. These diplomats were officially received at the main ceremonies on July 7, and presented with such national symbols as shell money and betel nut. It should be noted, however, that these symbols are equivocal--Polynesians do not use shell money and betel does not grow on atolls.

Finally, unity was expressed through presentation of distinguished service medals to people from a range of islands, ethnic groups (includ-

ing Chinese, Japanese, and European in addition to Melanesian), and denominations.

In all of this, however, some discordant notes were heard. My first indication that something was awry was the lack of interest evinced by my Anutan friends in the activities. The Anutan community in Honiara consisted of approximately forty persons, and few showed any desire to attend the festivities. On a number of occasions, I asked people to join me at one of the planned activities. The response was always that it was too crowded, too rainy, too hard to get to, or simply too uninteresting. The pretexts were diverse, but the answer was invariably negative. One man asked to see my copy of the program, but only to read the biography of the new governor-general--which *does* interest Anutans.

A few days into the celebration, one Anutan who had recently taken a job in town and was well positioned to hear local gossip commented that he had heard grumbling about the amount of money wasted on independence activities. My informant claimed that the events were only for the benefit of people who lived in town, worked for the government, or had the money or political clout to get to town for the affair. I cannot tell the extent to which this may have been projection and to what extent it was an accurate report on other people's comments. It is a fact, however, that the Solomons government spent something on the order of SI$l million on the celebration (Saemala 1988:9). The country is by no means rich, and one of the reasons many people feel little loyalty toward the government is the sparsity of services it provides.[20]

Some particularly cynical observers have suggested that the celebration was consciously conducted by the local elite for their own (largely financial) benefit. I have no evidence that this was a prime motivating factor among the event's organizers, but to some extent it did have that effect. In the organizers' defense, it would have been difficult to involve large numbers of people in the many activities held primarily for foreign diplomats. Moreover, quantities of pork, beef, fish, and other foods were made available for general distribution at several points around Honiara. Also, for the benefit of those unable to attend the celebration in Honiara, festivities were held in all of the provincial capitals. On the other hand, I have heard criticisms of the provincial celebrations similar to those directed at the national events. Without having witnessed these celebrations in person, it is difficult to assess the criticisms' validity. Just the fact that they were made and apparently believed, however, is significant.

In part, the events should be evaluated not in terms of dollars and cents but in terms of traditional Melanesian patterns of display and dis-

tribution (e.g., see Oliver 1967; Sahlins 1963; and many others). As one commentator put the matter: "The day was in fact the day which Solomon Islands wanted to show their joy as one nation under one flag. To many of us, it was not what was spent that was important, but what that day meant. The Solomon Island concept of feasting is not counting the cost but counting joy and celebration of the day" (P. Riti, personal communication). In the Melanesian context, the government's strategy of distributing the symbols of joy with the idea that they might be converted into moral capital makes sense. In the end, however, no government can safely ignore monetary costs.

At the official celebration on Independence Day, Prime Minister Ezekiel Alebua gave what I consider an excellent speech. His choice of theme, however, was peculiar given the occasion. He realistically documented the country's economic problems--weak currency, negative balance of trade, insufficiently diversified agricultural sector, too much spent on government salaries in proportion to what the government actually does. And he emphasized the importance of trimming government, increasing efficiency, diversifying agriculture, and developing industrial capacity to process the country's produce internally. It was curious, however, that he gave this speech at an event that was an obviously extravagant expenditure of scarce resources.

Moreover, while Alebua's speech struck *me* as a frank, realistic appraisal of where the Solomon Islands stood as of 1988, my Anutan friends were anything but impressed. One informant, who had lived in Honiara for years, had held several important positions in the national police force, and was a political supporter of former Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni, asserted that the economy was doing just fine until Alebua became prime minister. In this respect, he claimed that the reserve fund was now down to SI$20 million while under Mamaloni's government it had been up to SI$70 million, Apparently this feeling about Alebua and his government was widely shared, Just a few months later he was voted out of office, and Mamaloni once again assumed the duties of prime minister.

The same informant was convinced that the rain, which had dampened the first three days' activities, was brought on by ***rau raakau*** magic of Guadalcanal people from the "Weather Coast," who had not been involved in the week's events.[21] Threats of rain induced by magic had been made as early as February 1988 (G. Carter, personal communication, 1989); and when it rained through the early part of Independence Week, it was easy to believe that the threats had been carried out. This man did go to look around at Town Ground one day toward the middle

of the week, and his only comment was, *"E takavare.* The place is nothing but mud! It has been totally spoiled by the rain." The rain diminished by Wednesday of Independence Week and actually stopped for the independence ceremony itself on Thursday. Yet, he didn't go to Thursday's events either, saying that it was too hot in the sun(!). In short, he was convinced that the celebration was fundamentally flawed and was determined to find storm clouds under every silver lining.

Such negative evaluations, however, were not universally shared. A Malaitan friend of mine who had been given the major responsibility of organizing the week's cultural events commented that holding the celebration and carrying it off successfully was important just "to prove that we could do it." His point was that the Solomon Islands had never attempted an activity on the scale of the independence celebration, and it was important to be able to do it well in order to earn the respect of the international community as well as the country's own citizens.

Another high-ranking public official disputed the contention that funding the celebration cost money that would otherwise have been available for government services. His position was that funds were actually ***generated*** by the independence activities; services, therefore, did not suffer. This view was not entirely shared by one of the country's highest-ranking public servants--the permanent secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The secretary recognized that funds expended on the celebration could not be used for other purposes and that the supply of money was finite. Thus, he acknowledged some merit to the argument that resources devoted to the celebration would have been better spent on services. Yet, he strongly felt the need to have some major activities on a nationwide scale with which people throughout the country could identify. Without such activities, he argued, it would be extremely difficult to build a sense of national consciousness and make the Solomon Islands into a unified nation.

Another prominent official in the Foreign Ministry emphasized the international significance of the festivities. He stressed the importance of showing foreign visitors a smoothly run, large-scale operation, giving them a good time, and sending them away with a positive impression. Again, the ultimate point was to create a situation in which the Solomons would be taken seriously by the international political and business communities.

Conclusion

Most new Pacific Island states have enjoyed several advantages in comparison with other parts of the Third World. Prominent among these is

the peaceful transition to independence, which has forestalled much bloodshed, suffering, and animosity between new nations and former colonial powers. This is particularly true of such former British and Australian territories as Tuvalu, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.[22] In addition, the Solomons has been fortunate to avoid the major postindependence military confrontations that have plagued its neighbors.[23] As a result, the Solomon Islands has no standing army, nor do the police normally even carry firearms. Decisions generally are made in an orderly manner, according to the rule of law, and implemented as diligently as one can reasonably expect considering the limited education and experience of government officials and persons staffing public-service posts.

Despite these considerable advantages, however, the Solomon Islands is, in other respects, quite typical of newly independent Third World nations. Like other developing nations, it is faced with problems of population, schooling, economic resources, infrastructure (particularly transport and communication), developing class conflict, micronationalism, and ethnic conflict. Yet, a shared sense of national identity is vital to provide "a firm and stable underpinning for the fundamental forms and goals" of government and "continuity and intergenerational agreement in the political culture" (Dawson and Prewitt 1969:61). Only under such conditions can leaders accurately gauge public sentiment and expectations, as is essential to intelligent formulation of policies and actions. In addition, if a government must use its resources to combat political resistance, it may not be able to provide the services needed to command its population's loyalty. Thus, it becomes essential for a nation like the Solomons to create among its citizens a moral sense of the state's value (see Clapham 1985:61, quoted on page 19 above) by manipulating its most readily available resource: ***symbols*** of unity. This is what the government attempted to do through the independence celebration.

The last page of text in the Tenth Independence Anniversary Celebrations Official Program contains a song entitled "We Are One Big Happy Nation." The lyrics are as follows:

God Bless our 10th Anniversary
10th Anniversary, 10th Anniversary
God Bless our 10th Anniversary
Happy Anniversary
We are all brothers; and
We are all sisters
Our Father in Heaven who loves one and all

We are One Big Happy Family
God's Family, God's Family
We are One Big Happy Family
God's Family are we
He is my brother; and
She is my sister
Our Father in Heaven who loves you and me

We are One Big Happy people
Gods people, God's people
We are One Big Happy people
God's people are we
You are our brothers; and
You are our sisters
Our Father in Heaven who loves all of us

We are One Big Happy Wantoks
God's Wantoks, God's Wantoks
We are One Big Happy Wantoks
God's Wantoks true
Wantoks are brothers; and Wantoks are sisters
Our Father in Heaven who loves everyone

Solomon Islands One Happy Country
God's Country, God's Country
Solomon Islands One Happy Country
God's Happy Isles
Provinces are brothers; and
Provinces are sisters
Our Father in Heaven who loves you too

Solomon Islands One Happy Nation
God's Nation, God's Nation
Solomon Islands One Happy Nation
God's Nation it is
Pacific our brothers; and
The World neighbours too
Our Father in Heaven bless all nations too

The song may be interpreted as wishful thinking, a statement of collective aspirations, or political hyperbole. Be that as it may, its senti-

ments express admirably the theme of the celebration: that the Solomon Islands is a unified Christian nation, enjoying a social order modeled on kinship ties--a community of ***wantoks,*** occupying its rightful position in the family of nations. In fact, of course, this is a far cry from political reality. It is, however, a fairly accurate description of the way Solomon Islands leaders would like to picture their homeland.

The tenth anniversary of independence celebration was, thus, a major event utilized by the government to try to inject a note of unity and sense of national consciousness into a heterogeneous and widely dispersed population. These activities required a tremendous commitment of resources--human and monetary--on the part of a small country with few resources to expend. Reactions to the celebration show it to have been a partial--but by no means an unqualified--success, and in the end it came to be another focus for the ongoing debate over the proper role of government and relative positions of the islands' many and diverse communities. Thus, the events brought into sharp symbolic focus all of the conflicts, tensions, and contradictions plaguing the attempt to forge a nation of a newly independent Third World territory,

NOTES

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1. Similarly, Pye has cited ten commonly used definitions for the closely related concept of "political development" (1966:33-45). These are political development as: (1) "the political prerequisite of economic development," (2) "the politics typical of industrial societies," (3) "political modernization," (4) "the operation of a nation-state," (5) "administrative and legal development," (6) "mass mobilization and participation," (7) "the building of democracy," (8) "stability and orderly change," (9) "mobilization and power," and (10) "one aspect of a multi-dimensional process of social change."

2. On this point, see also Dawson and Prewitt (1969:61) and Lewellen (1983: 118-120).

3. Another way to describe this problem is in terms of "nationalism," defined as "a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" Gellner (1983:l). Of course, if by "national unit" is meant something like a group of people sharing a common language, culture, and sense of identity, the fact is that the political and national units--"nation" and "state"--rarely if ever coincide.

4. Familiar illustrations of this issue in the United States include the black nationalist movement and integration of Latin American immigrants into the wider society. The Soviet Union's problems in dealing with ethnic rivalries among its Baltic republics have recently been front-page news throughout the world.

5. The communities in question are Anuta in the Solomon Islands' Temotu Province and Nukumanu Atoll in Papua New Guinea's North Solomons Province. Both are isolated Polynesian outliers in predominantly Melanesian countries.

6. The seven provinces, from west to east, are Western, Isabel, Central, Guadalcanal, Malaita, Makira, and Temotu. In 1984, the national Parliament enacted legislation devolving many important powers to the provincial governments. Some national leaders with whom I spoke in 1988 had reconsidered the wisdom of this move. They indicated that several powers given to the provinces in the 1984 act, such as control over local shipping, were on the verge of being reclaimed by the central government. This view is counterbalanced, however, by a push from many quarters to give the provinces still greater autonomy (see Gegeo 1989: 161).

7. The British declared a protectorate over New Georgia, Guadalcanal, Savo, Malaita, and San Cristobal (Makira) in 1893. The protectorate was extended to include Rennell and Sikaiana in 1897, and the Eastern Outer Islands (now Temotu Province) in 1898. In 1899, Santa Isabel, Choiseul, the Shortland Islands, and Ontong Java were ceded by Germany in return for Britain's relinquishing its claims in Samoa (Solomon Islands Government Information Service 1983).

8. Thus, in many ways, the western Solomons have more in common with Papua New Guinea's North Solomons Province than with the islands to the east. Similarly, the islands of Temotu Province have more in common geographically and perhaps culturally with northern Vanuatu than with the remainder of the Solomons.

9. Language differences have proven to be among the most intractable barriers to national unity in country after country, from India (Geertz 1973b:255-256; Harrison 1956:623) to Spain (University of Chicago 1989). Thus, it is not surprising that the Solomons has also fallen prey to this dilemma.

10. The most notable example is the Western Breakaway Movement, discussed above.

11. For example, there has been discussion on and off of Choiseul breaking away from Western and establishing itself as a province in its own right.

12. The country's major exports are copra, palm oil, fish, and lumber, The bulk of the copra and oil palm industries are controlled by Solomon Lever, local affiliate of the multinational Unilever Company (Larson 1966, 1970). The fishing industry is dominated by Taiyo, a Japanese corporation (see Meltzoff and LiPuma 1983, 1985), while lumber is exploited by a number of overseas companies. In each case, the national government has a financial interest in the operation, but business decisions are in the hands of foreigners. Natural resources are being depleted, particularly fish and timber, and some observers have questioned whether the country is getting a fair return for what it has given up. Similar points could be made about gold mining, which is still at an exploratory stage, and the nascent tourist industry. A series of provocative articles about these issues has appeared in LINK, a bimonthly magazine published by the Solomon Islands Development Trust.

13. The rumor in Temotu Province during July 1988 was that the broadcasting station had been closed because of difficulty replacing a defective part. I am grateful to the Reverend Philimon Riti, who was a member of the SIBC board at the time in question, for correcting my misapprehension. Still, this experience is one more illustration of the obstacles to trustworthy communication.

14. *LINK* magazine, cited above, is a national publication aimed largely toward the provinces and villages. The number of outer islanders who actually read it, however, is unlikely to be large at any time in the near future.

15. Nationally, the Solomons does not yet have a population problem, although specific areas--particularly Honiara--have become extremely crowded. More importantly, however, if the growth rate is not curbed, a population problem looms on the horizon. According to the 1986 census, more than 50 percent of the population is under sixteen years of age (Gegeo 1989: 162).

16. The initial independence celebration was not truly national in scope because of the Western Province boycott. Thus, the tenth anniversary provided the occasion for the first major *national* celebration.

17. I say this on the basis of informal conversations with many Solomon Islanders in 1983-1984 and again in 1988. A very different view is presented by the Reverend Philimon Riti, who served on the Constitutional Review Committee. The committee found that "about 90% of the submissions wanted the post abolished" on the grounds that it was ineffectual and a waste of money (Riti, personal communication, 1989). I have no immediate explanation for the discrepancy between my findings and those of the committee.

18. Unfortunately, Lepping's term has since been marred by controversy involving alleged irregularities in his election.

19. Moreover, my experience convinces me that Anutans' perceptions of the central government in many ways are fairly typical of small, isolated, rural communities despite their being Polynesians in a predominantly Melanesian country.

20. In fact, I have been told that the initial plan called for an expenditure of SI$2 million, but this was cut back because of the public outcry (G. Carter, personal communication, 1989).

21. The "Weather Coast" of Guadalcanal has been described as "the neglected side." According to *LINK* (Solomon Islands Development Trust 1988:4), some people here "still refer to their home as 'the polio side', not only in reference to one of the local languages, but because they believe they are paralysed by the lack of activity and advantages enjoyed by the rest of Guadalcanal." *Rau raakau* in Anutan literally means "plant leaf." In this context, it refers to a magical procedure in which plant material is used as an integral part of a spell. Anutans perceive this to be the typical Melanesian technique for performing sorcery.

22. By contrast, New Caledonia has experienced violent confrontations over the past several years as the indigenous population has sought independence from a seemingly intransigent French government. In addition, France appears determined to maintain its Wallis and Futuna colony as well as a number of possessions in eastern Polynesia. A somewhat comparable situation exists in Irian Jaya (formerly Dutch New Guinea), now claimed as an Indonesian province despite many years of local armed resistance. None of the Pacific

territories under U.S. jurisdiction has yet achieved full independence, although Belau and the Federated States of Micronesia are internally self-governing, But neither have they experienced armed independence struggles comparable to those in New Caledonia or Irian Jaya.

23. Here, one might point to the Santo Rebellion in Vanuatu, which in the end was militarily suppressed with the assistance of Papua New Guinea's Defence Force. Meanwhile, Papua New Guinea itself has had to deal with periodic and continuing "clan warfare,'" tensions with Indonesia over Irian Jaya, and recent acts of sabotage on Bougainville, which have closed the Panguna copper mine.

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