

**VOICES OF LIBERATION: INDIGENOUS POLITICAL WRITINGS IN  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA, SOLOMON ISLANDS, AND VANUATU DURING  
THE DECOLONIZATION ERA**

David Chappell  
*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

HISTORIANS OF POST-1945 DECOLONIZATION in Oceania often say that British “administrations were pushing for independence more than the islanders” (Thompson 1994, 153), and a literature scholar criticized indigenous political writings for their “absence of a truly revolutionary heritage [or] utopian schemes” (Subramani 1992: 18–20). Yet, considering the arbitrary colonial bordering in linguistically diverse Melanesia, “national” political consciousness was still under construction. Islanders had governed themselves in local village councils for millennia and had very limited access to colonial education, so grassroots movements for self-empowerment rarely embraced the entire colonial territory. The foreign-derived names of Melanesian countries typified their nation-building challenges: Papua (a Malay word), New Guinea (after West Africa), New Hebrides (after islands north of Scotland), and Solomon Islands (after the Hebrew king); Melanesia was a Greek-derived term for islands of dark-skinned people. “Decolonization” under a centralized administration thus became a paternalistic, even neo-colonial, process of top-down “modernization” by foreign rulers and indigenous elites (Banivanua Mar 2016).

In 1960, the United Nations reiterated its appeals for decolonization, so Britain and its settler dominions of Australia and New Zealand began to heed the “winds of change” (McIntyre 2014). Between 1962 and 1970, Western Sāmoa, the Cook Islands, Nauru, and Fiji all became self-governing states. In Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and New Hebrides (Vanuatu), first generation

educated elites were very aware of their future roles as civil servants or political leaders of democratic “nation-states,” so they engaged in thought-provoking discussions. This essay will re-present voices from a sampling of their articles and letters in student or elite publications during the 1960s and 1970s, because they reveal both indigenous intellectual agency and the ongoing challenges of liberation. Two salient circuits of discourse emerged: one at the University of Papua New Guinea (founded in 1966), in *Nilaidat* [Ndt] (1968–71) and the Waigani Seminars (from 1967 on), and another spanning New Zealand (*One Talk* [OT] in Auckland 1967–69), Solomon Islands (*The Kakamora Reporter* [KR] 1970–75), and Vanuatu (*New Hebrides Viewpoints* [NHV] in the 1970s). The regional University of the South Pacific in Fiji (founded in 1968) produced *Unispac* (1968 on) and *Pacific Perspective* [PP] (1972–79), but this essay will focus mainly on PNG, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

### **Decolonizing the Mind in Papua New Guinea**

Colonialism was transnational in that it linked competing industrial powers to overseas territories in hierarchical ways, so decolonizers responded with subaltern networking. During medical training in Fiji, for example, Albert Maori Kiki of PNG was inspired by watching a documentary film about community development in Nigeria. By 1960, he was organizing social welfare and labor associations to end racial discrimination in PNG. He felt that the supremacist White Australia policy was preventing the country from being independent (1968: 78, 97–100). In PNG the local Native Councils, modeled on British colonies in Africa, still relied on expatriate patrol officers to liaison with the capital, Port Moresby, while the Legislative Council had two dozen members but only three appointed indigenous advisors. The first “national” elections were held for a House of Assembly in 1964, but many members lacked education or national-level experience (Nelson 1974, 125). Some asked if PNG could become a state of Australia, so officials quickly “began to preach national unity [within PNG], and designed a flag, an anthem, a national day, a university, an airline, and a local bureaucracy” (Denoon 1999, 286). Tom Mboya of Kenya visited PNG and called his people “brothers” of Melanesians, and Ali Mazrui of Tanzania visited but criticized the lack of preparation for independence. PNG educator Ebia Olewale voiced his approval of Kwame Nkrumah’s achievement of national unity in Ghana and of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere’s nonaligned socialism in the Cold War (Griffin et al. 1979: 147, 249, 262). Michael Somare would visit Africa and the United States to examine efforts by “black countries” to run their own affairs, but he was stung by African criticism that PNG was not pushing hard enough for sovereignty and also sobered by African-American struggles against racism and poverty. He read Mboya’s book *Freedom and After*

and decided that PNG needed more preparation for independence, especially in education (Somare 1975: 75–82).

In 1965, the PNG House of Assembly created a university, though critics said that it was premature. In a population of 2.2 million, only 200,000 students attended primary schools, 17,000 attended high schools, and 5600 were in technical or vocational schools. Racists claimed “rock apes” did not need universities, and some critics warned the university might be a “Mau Mau factory” (Nelson 1974: 176–79). Ulli Beier, who had taught literature in Nigeria, began teaching at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) in 1966. He created the literary journal *Kovave* (“initiation”), started the *Papua Pocket Poets* series, and edited the autobiography of Kiki; his wife also promoted visual arts at UPNG. Beier was surprised by the racial segregation in the capital: “many expatriate public servants in Papua New Guinea held the opinion that Africans were more civilized ‘natives’ than Papua New Guineans.” Ikenna Nwokola, an Australian-trained Nigerian lawyer, also taught at UPNG, represented local people in the courts, and became “a role model for many of our brightest students.” Nigerian Nobel Prize laureate Wole Soyinka visited, and his plays were soon performed in PNG; they inspired Arthur Jawodimbari to study theater in Nigeria (Beier 2005: 135–39; Denoon 1997). “African literature became an inspiration to many Papua New Guinean writers,” Beier recalled, “because they identified with many of the cultural anxieties and political issues which African authors—particularly those of the French *négritude* school—were concerned with” (Beier 2005, 138).

Beier’s writing courses attracted “the most politically conscious students. . . . They were aware that they were the first generation of Papuans and New Guineans who could talk back at the white man.” Yet *Négritude* authors (usually in France) had idealized rural African culture and the beauty of blackness, while PNG students “were less romantic and more down to earth.” Some went home to work for change in their villages: John Waiko tried to persuade his Binandere people “not to sell their forest,” and John Kasaipwalova founded a self-help movement in the Trobriand Islands (Beier 2005: 56–57). Beier recalled, “The writers fulfilled an important political function. . . . They helped to raise the level of political consciousness on and off the campus [and] forged links with the young politicians and with Highland workers” (Denoon 1997: 192–3). At the 1972 Waigani Seminar at UPNG, agriculture expert René Dumont, author of *False Start in Africa*, gave the opening address. He warned against letting foreign development experts marginalize their indigenous traditions, expertise, and self-respect. Students crowded the meeting hall and applauded such radical insights (May 2004, 94). In March 1968, the first issue appeared of a student journal called *Nilaidat* (Our Voice), edited by Leo Morgan, with Leo Hannett and Moses Havini. They were all from the island of Bougainville

near the Solomon Islands, where the Panguna copper mine was a major money-maker for the country, without much benefit to the local inhabitants.

*Nilaidat* criticized Australian Minister of Territories Charles Barnes, who was suspicious of educated indigenous nationalists and regarded Bougainville's copper as a resource for the "people as a whole," not only for local landowners (Downs 1980: 274–8). Morgan said a "cultural revolution" was transforming the country, which needed to integrate indigenous cultural values into the "future way of life," although "It is not easy to touch the roots of nihilism and disorder in the hearts of men" (*Nilaidat* [Ndt] 1:1 1968). Leo Hannett, a former seminary student studying law, wrote essays about the assassinations in the United States of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy. Despite being the model for democracy, he said, "America has again, as it did in the case of Abraham Lincoln and John Kennedy, cast to the ground its invaluable and rarest gems. . . . We too in New Guinea have a dream. We want to see our land grow into a nation, where all are free, enjoying equal rights and opportunities." To achieve "nationhood," PNG needed to overcome "ignorance, disunity or that embryo of racism engendered by injustices and discriminatory practices of today—all must be stamped out. Now is the time" (Ndt 1:4 May 1968). "Elites must speak with open minds and independent thinking," he argued, because through understanding the local culture, they "can lead our people to the threshold of civilization and modern life [through] an alliance . . . with the voiceless mass at home, in the plantations, and in the town slums where the indigenous people are silently taught the language of hatred, racialism and disunity." Even tribalism embodied "love and brotherhood," which he said activists might reshape into "genuine nationalism" (Ndt 1:6, July 1968).

Cultural change had created ambiguities and anxieties in Western-educated students. In "Rainmaker's Child," Hannett wrote of his village, where his father was a rainmaker who protected canoe voyagers. But young Leo's Christian, English-language schooling cut him off: "By the time I was old enough to have gone on an expedition and thus become part of the traditional trade cycle, the trips, like so many of our old customs, had been abandoned" (1974, 58). Hannett had first wanted to be a Catholic priest but was disillusioned when "the priests themselves were not free from racial prejudices" (*Kovave*, 2:1, November 1970: 22–28). In *Nilaidat*, Hannett asked "Is Christianity Still Christian?" and likened it to "opium or L.S.D." (Ndt 2:1 1969: 7–10). He felt discriminated against as a "Solomon Islander" for being too black and witnessed the harsh treatment of plantation laborers, while rival Christian sects competed for souls instead of following Jesus: "I loved my people too much. . . . For the first time also, I became very critical of the Administration." He and John Momis, a future president of autonomous Bougainville, formed a student group to discuss unfair mining agreements and timber leases and created a paper called *Dialogue* to

express their ideas. An official accused Hannett of being Communist, and the church censored *Dialogue*, so Hannett left the seminary (*Kovave* 2:1, November 1970, 28). Morgan said Australian paternalism “carries gradualism to the point of imperceptibility.” Barnes resented the nationalist party, Pangu, which wanted self-government, but Morgan said “the majority of the Territory’s educated elite” supported it. *Nilaidat* also printed the Tanzanian policy on self-reliance under democratic socialism that intervened “actively in the economic life of the Nation so as to assure the well-being of all citizens” (Ndt 1:6, July 1968).

In July 1968, UPNG students formed a Politics Club influenced by Pangu, with future prime minister Rabbie Namaliu as president. They soon organized their first demonstration, against apartheid, when the South African ambassador to Australia visited. Black Power and anti-racist signs greeted him, and Beier, Hannett, and Morgan asked pointed questions, which the ambassador evaded or dismissed as “communist” (Ndt 1:7, August 1968: 8–9). When the university tried to control *Nilaidat*’s content, the editors resigned, but the protest made national news, so a petition of 150 signatures won their reinstatement. Charles Lepani said the protest was not the expression of a “frustrated minority” or a “pressure group” but rather of broad opposition to racism. Future leaders had to have “the ‘guts’ to stick their necks out for their convictions” and the “conscience” to stand up for the “rights and freedom of their nation” (Ndt 1:8, September 1968). Parei Tamei asked, “Will you really join in? The first locally-trained University students incline more to see things in national terms, whereas most of our brothers and sisters see them in [local] terms.” Education enabled him to understand issues better, so he called for a “great national struggle for the survival of Papua-New Guinea,” because “young people the world over are on the search for truth, peace and prosperity” (Ndt 1:9, October 1968). In 1969, Indonesia held a disputed “Act of Free Choice” in West Papua to legitimize its authority over the western half of New Guinea, and Australia acquiesced without consulting the PNG legislature. Five hundred UPNG students marched in protest, and *Nilaidat* satirized Barnes in a cover cartoon as a little god, with people bowing and reciting, “Our Father who art in Canberra, Charles be thy name, give us this day our daily blarney” (Ndt 2:3, June 1969, 2:3, July 1969). Afterward, the paper called itself “A Sort of Journal of News and Opinion (Allegedly All Radical!)” (Ndt 2:6, October 1969).

John Waiko, the first Papua New Guinean to obtain a Ph.D. in history, contributed regularly to *Nilaidat*. He condemned the theft of traditional artifacts by outside museum collectors, who were “incompetent to paddle against the ocean of our culture [so they] seduced us, the islanders, to swim with them until we were drunk [then] stole all our values and left us unconscious on the ‘restless nowhere’” (Ndt 1:7, August 1968: 8–9). Yet he predicted that the Eurocentric “rejection of the traditional culture and the ‘ancestro-centric’ view point will

pave the way to modern nationalism. . . . Papuans and New Guineans will use every means to defend their culture against foreign swamping.” Outsiders had tried to paint the people white, but in the tropics that washes off in the rain: “the black heads which God created will always show” (Ndt 2:4, August 1969: 4–5). Waiko’s play, “The Unexpected Hawk,” portrayed police burning a village to force the people to move to a site where the colonizer regrouped tribes for better control. A boy asks his mother, “Why do they treat us like this?” She answers, “No one knows why. We do not understand them, and they do not try to understand us. But every tree has its roots deep down in the ground. . . . I want you to go to school, so that you can dig out the roots. . . . Do not hesitate to uproot their tree and drink their wisdom” (*Kovave* 1:2, November 1969). Waiko criticized colonizers who regarded local resistance movements as irrational “cargo cults” or as divisive threats to their cadastral partitions. Instead, he saw both continuity and change in cultural separatism and religious syncretism, because such responses to domination showed vitality and resilience: “a cult is the new-old way of responding to an old-new situation” (Waiko 1973, 420).

Ulli Beier wrote, “The only work of New Guinea literature which so far can be seen forming part of the wider scene of Third World nationalism is John Kasaipwalova’s poem ‘Reluctant Flame.’ This poem is a spectacular outburst of passion, with echoes of Aimé Césaire and the négritude movement but with a human warmth and New Guinea imagery that are entirely the author’s own” (Beier 1973, xiv). For example, “Every turn of my head sees your tentacles strangling innocent *kanakas*. . . . People will live, people will die, but the tiny flame will grow its arms and legs very slowly, until one day its volcanic pulse will tear apart the green mountain [of money]” (Ibid. 57–58). During Kasaipwalova’s studies in Australia, leftist activism against the U.S. war in Vietnam had inspired him, but at UPNG, he hated his law course, wrote a diatribe on his final exam, switched to literature, and joined Hannett in the Black Power movement. In *Nilaidat*, he adapted ideas from Frantz Fanon. Kasaipwalova criticized colonizers who psychologically conditioned indigenous people to accept an inferior role in their own country as mere “stone age pagans” who had “no ideas of independence.” Black *self*-education could promote national consciousness, which was “a creative search for what has been robbed . . . the new awareness of their common exploited state unites the black people in a common struggle.” Political action could cause a “re-awakening by the colonized,” despite attempts to divert leaders with “a national flag, the divisive borderline between Papua and New Guinea, a common language and even the national anthem.” Like Waiko, Kasaipwalova saw local protest movements as “the beginning of what is to come in Niugini,” because they expanded beyond ethno-linguistic identities (Ndt 3:1, July 1970: 7–12). In PNG, Kasaipwalova said “modernization” meant selling resources to industrial countries, creating a politics of manipulation, an economics of

dependence, and a culture of consumption, but he sought a politics of creativity and grassroots alliances (1973 Waigani).

PNG nationalism also emerged through indigenization of the bureaucracy. In 1964, Barnes fixed pay scales for civil servants so that indigenous workers would receive less than half the pay of their white counterparts. Kiki called that regression “the biggest political blunder the Australian government has ever made in the territory” (1968, 144). At the two year Administrative College, “it was there that I met many of the men who are my closest friends and allies.” Kiki helped to create the Bully Beef Club, which bought tinned corned beef to share during discussions, fueling their “political consciousness” (ibid. 126, 149–50). Michael Somare joined and called the Bully Beef Club “the first political forum we had,” even though spies asked them, “What is this Kiki up to?” (1975, 46). In 1967, they formed the Papua New Guinea United Party, or Pangu Pati, whose name Somare said was partly inspired by the Kenyan party acronyms Kanu and Kadu (Somare 1975, 51). Pangu described the colonial administration as “out of date, autocratic, unrealistic and inflexible” (Kiki 1968: 153–4). By 1973, Pangu’s eight point program would have pleased Dumont: increase the people’s role in the economy, spread wealth more equally, decentralize economic activities, encourage small-scale artisanal and agricultural development, reduce dependency on imports or foreign aid, promote women’s equality, and expand government control over the economy. Somare said self-reliance planning drew on indigenous values of communal egalitarianism: “We do not want to build a modern society if that means a society in which only the powerful and wealthy can get the benefits. . . . We are developing in a Papua New Guinea way. We want to stand on our own feet . . . beggars cannot be choosers . . . all of us will have to share the burden of supporting our country.” As for university students, they “must be aware of their responsibilities to the common people” (*Pacific Perspectives* [PP] 1973).

### Walter Lini’s Wantoks

Like many Pacific leaders, Walter Lini of New Hebrides (Vanuatu) was educated at mission schools, but when he studied to be an Anglican priest at St. John’s College in Auckland from 1966 to 1968, he complained that the coursework contained “very little New Zealand and Pacific thinking.” He helped to organize the Western Pacific Students’ Association (WPSA) “to bring us all together . . . so that we would not feel lost in cities.” They published *One Talk*, from the pidgin word *wantok* for “members of one language group or close friends.” Lini and John Bani sent the paper to south Pacific countries to “help them think about the ways in which they would like their countries to develop.” Lini said, “life in Auckland grew frustrating for me because I felt that the western ways and influences there

were almost overwhelming me. I think I got away from New Zealand just in time" (1980: 14–15). *One Talk* first appeared in October 1967: "Our group" went to church gatherings; sang island, pop, or folk songs; organized picnics; and held a discussion on "Women's Role in the Islands." "The most surprising thing," Lini wrote, "is the hectic pace of daily life, where man is continually competing against time [plus] we have to face the difficulty of attempting to think and reason like a New Zealander, if only because New Zealanders mark our exams." In a letter, two islander carpentry apprentices warned, "Overseas students like you . . . have had some experience of Western civilization as 'Melanesians.' What are you going to do when you return to Backward Melanesia? You young people should stir up the people and show them the right track. Be sure to make use of your education and set a good foundation for Melanesia as a whole" (*One Talk* [OT] 1, October 1967).

WPSA President Mostyn Habu, a Solomon Islander at Auckland University, wrote, "the West Pacific is a region of muddled diversity . . . not only in political and economic dependence but there is also diversity in religion, language, custom and tradition." The students wanted "to build a strong and united foundation on which their people can stand to face the buffeting from the harsh world into which they have been introduced." The WPSA hoped to

combat this paralyzing state of affairs, so that we become first of all citizens of a certain nation . . . the most critical strategic position we have is the rising number of our young educated people. This section of the population of today will be the most influential elite of tomorrow. Believe it or not, like it or not; it is from this group that our leaders will come. Are we going to allow our leaders to be divided? No! Never. Let us face the future as one" (OT, 2 February 1968)

Lini observed that

Everywhere in the world today, there is the air of freedom, and independence, man is battling for his rights in . . . Vietnam, the Civil rights in United States, Rhodesia. . . . A Melanesian now wonders whether to drop his own culture or to know what his own culture is and to know what outside cultures are good, and to formulate from these two strands a new culture based on Christianity (OT 3 1968: 2).

Lini expressed concern over the crises in new African countries, due to ethnic disunity, corruption in the civil service, emphasizing urban over rural development, and unemployed school leavers—which was partly due to the British style of education that neglected specialized training. Yet protests everywhere

suggested that “The adult world is on its way out and the new generation is curious to take over.” John Bani criticized Britain and France, who shared the New Hebrides as a “Condominium,” for not preparing his country for independence. He saw a “black cloud over New Hebrides” because self-determination faced insufficient coordination between the two rival colonial rulers (OT, 3 1968: 11–12).

As a deacon in the Solomon Islands in 1969, Lini helped to start the Kakamora Sports Club in Honiara, the capital, and also helped to launch a newspaper, *The Kakamora Reporter*. After returning home, he, Bani, and Donald Kalpokas founded the New Hebrides Cultural Association in 1971, and soon published *New Hebrides Viewpoints* (NHV), the voice of the National Party (NP). NHV invited open discussion, and Lini regarded it as a continuation of *One Talk* and *The Kakamora Reporter*. He encouraged people to join the party so they could elect a Pacific-style government that would improve resource development and train local people to take over managing the country. He said the British and French were moving “in the wrong direction” by creating dependence on overseas aid while foreign planters and businessmen exploited valuable lands: “if you disagree you had better tell us before we convert everyone to our belief! It is our right to insist on the need to control our political destiny” (NHV 6, February 1972). Support for the NP came mainly from the anglophone, Protestant circuit, but Britain and France disagreed about granting independence: the British were willing, the French not. Indigenous people had no citizenship rights, and Lini said “all New Hebrideans today believe rightly that they were cheated over land.” The NP vowed that “all claimed but uncultivated land must in the end go back to the right people of the land” (NHV 6, February 1972). European settlers were only 3 percent of the population but claimed to own 36 percent of the land, and half the cultivable land in use was controlled mainly by French planters (*Vanua'aku Viewpoints* [VV] 8, 3, January–February 1978).

Lini proposed rural cooperatives to create jobs and grow food instead of importing it: “We have always been independent through all these years of Condominium Administration but Britain and France have tried to colonize us. In reality the New Hebrides could be independent tomorrow: what is hard is for the New Hebrides to be self-supporting” (NHV 7, September 1972). George Kalkoa lamented the lack of national integration: “We are a lost society. We are a people looking for a new identity.” To build “brotherhood,” people should participate in associations, school activities, and “small meetings of people in a community to exchange ideas” (NHV 8, November–December 1972). John Bani said the United Nations (UN) should send a fact-finding mission to decide on a date for independence, and he found support at a Pan-African Congress in Tanzania, while activists protested to regain their lands, but white settlers armed and formed political parties to attract Catholic or syncretic religious minorities

(NHV 11, October 1973). Lini told the UN Decolonization Committee, “there is tension in the New Hebrides that has never been felt before. People are politically awake . . . the way out, in order to retain peace and justice, is for the British and French to leave the New Hebrides and for us to have one government” (PP 3:1, 1974, 81–83; NHV 12, June 1974). In 1975, the NP changed its name to Vanua’aku Pati (“Our Land Party,” or VP), so *NHV* became *Vanua’aku Viewpoints* (VV), with Nikenike Vurobaravu as editor and Hilda Lini (Walter’s sister) as assistant. To push for progress, the VP created a People’s Provisional Government with a flag, land reoccupations, road blocks, and tax collection (VV 8:4, June 1978). The first elected national assembly failed because it still had too many appointees instead of “one person, one vote,” so the VP boycotted it until universal suffrage won the VP by a two-thirds majority: “The party has always been the vanguard of the struggle against any form of colonial domination in Vanuaaku, part of a common struggle in the Pacific.” (VV 9:1, March 1979).

### Seeking Solomon’s (Wise) Islanders

In 1970, Henry Raraka and Ella and Francis Bugotu founded *The Kakamora Reporter* (KR) to promote national unity and decolonization, because “things are not altogether what they seem to be.” The British Solomon Islands *News Sheet* could not be frank, because civil servants were banned from politics, so the “true situation” was not known by the majority (KR 4, June 1970). KR’s editors saw “an urgent need for a ‘Forum’ where the ‘old’ and the ‘new,’ the ‘policy-maker’ and the ‘academic’ must meet, to discuss informally important issues that affect or will affect our country.” The intelligentsia and civil servants “must work together.” KR also supported the creation of a regional organization to discuss issues (KR No. 19, September 1971). Thanks to Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara of Fiji, the South Pacific Forum was born, but member states had to be self-governing. Raraka said a “Melanesian press” was important “for the creation of genuine national unity and self-identity among Solomon Islanders.” He criticized the British administration’s lack of development priorities, because it suppressed dissent among the educated elite, who depended on civil service jobs. KR was “run for Melanesians and by Melanesians,” because they “are in a better position to understand, dissect, present and argue their own particular problems.” Raraka saw four categories in the existing regional press: mission/government, commercial, tertiary institutions (e.g., *Nilaidat* at UPNG and *Pacific Perspective* at USP), and “political papers” like KR or *NHV*: “they all have a common end, and that is, to bring about awareness among the people,” not only about local issues but also “outside events [to] broaden the horizons of the population” (Raraka 1973: 437–9).

KR hoped to dispel fears that self-government might hand over power to a particular indigenous minority. It was “known as a controversial paper—and we would like it to stay that way!” Raraka envisioned a “Melanesian press, in Melanesia . . . now is the time—tomorrow will be too late” (Ibid.). Such indigenous newspapers also cross-fertilized. When NHV appeared, its first issue reprinted an article from KR, which reciprocated by reprinting an NHV essay, in which Lini contrasted British and French rule in the Pacific. Unlike Britain, France favored the assimilation of its subjects, not independence, so Lini wondered, “What is the future of the New Hebrides?” (KR No. 19, September 1971: 6–9). KR published UPNG student protest demands over public service wages and university stipends and also a reply from Chief Minister Somare (KR No. 43, May–June 1974: 7–10). Like the New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands had few secondary schools and lacked a university, so KR was interested in what students from the Solomons at UPNG were thinking. It sent Geoffrey Beti to investigate. He reported that the students were “above all concerned about the future of their country,” because “they knew they must play a leading part.” They were “eager to change what seems wrong, ready to learn from the experience of other countries and to build a new Melanesia.” KR praised the students’ goals but hoped they would not all go into politics, where salaries were higher, because the civil service needed to localize (KR No. 15, May 1971: 1–2).

Beti interviewed law student Frank Ofagiono, who suggested that their country had gone through three phases under British rule: stagnation (1893–1960), when people had a voice mainly in local councils and were outnumbered by expatriate appointees in the protectorate’s Advisory Council; “wakening” (1960–70), when people had more voice in the 1967 Legislative Council and “Solomon Islanders were beginning to see what they are and where they stand in relation to their expatriate masters”; and, finally, participation (1970 to the present). Ofagiono predicted that “the 1970s should see the death throes of colonialism in the Solomons,” though the urban elite still had to communicate better with the rural majority. Resources needed more development, but no country, on its own, was “completely viable in economy. There is always interdependence.” Regarding non-Melanesian minorities, such as expatriate Europeans, Gilbertese, Fijians (including Indians), or Chinese, Ofagiono said the British had moved such people around their empire, but with independence Solomon Islanders could decide who came in, since some migrants acted superior to Melanesians. The Solomons should make it “on our own,” but “common trade or interests should be encouraged,” and they should have relationships with all sides in the Cold War: “Why should we take sides anyway?” KR also printed a speech on adult education by Nyerere of Tanzania and quoted President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, who said that independence was just the first step in decolonization (KR No. 15, May 1971: 8–12). Both leaders were in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Neighboring elites compared notes when their leaders considered using local council style consensus building instead of political parties and votes of no confidence (Kenilorea Waigani 1973, Paia *Journal of Pacific History* [JPH] 1975) and when they discussed making pidgin languages official alongside English (N 2:5, August 10, 1969; KR 4, June 1970). One UPNG student said “Solomonizing” the constitution was better than “packaged tangibles, whereas the qualities of the Melanesian way of life that are needed to be injected into the Constitution are based on intangible values . . . what is Melanesian can also be modern. Modernization is not the same thing as Westernization” (KR 34, January 1973: 3–12). The British Westminster system prevailed officially, but Sam Alasia suggested that the two systems blended, because new “parliamentary big men” had to deliver improvements for their voters or else not be reelected, which often happened. Yet he still felt that centralization had created “a marked gap between the government and its subjects” (1989, 151). Jonathan Fifi’i, a mission-educated teacher, became “Mr. Rural Area” as an elected leader, because he sought to protect ancestral customs and land rights from “neo-colonial” development (1989: 137–47). After the Solomon Islands’ independence in 1978, Francis Bugotu felt nostalgic about KR, in light of the “lack of vision and responsibility in our present media in Solomon Islands,” which preferred “flashy headline clichés” in a “neo-colonial . . . flabby ‘copy-cat’ nation” that was “not able to think realistically.” He said that KR had been acclaimed as “the most effective indigenous and radical publication” in the region and as an “intellectual magazine.” KR’s purpose was “informing and involving the public in preparations for independence” and was thus “the forerunner of articulate and responsible reporting. Can we say it is something of the past, or something that is missing now and is needed for the future?” The Solomon Islands kept the British monarch as Head of State, but KR had once satirized a visit by Queen Elizabeth II: “Most of us never give this a thought, and those of us who do, don’t agree with it. . . . The Queen will say how she looks forward to welcoming us as a full member of the Commonwealth, even if we are bankrupt when we apply for membership, and we shall drown our sorrows in some royal gin and tonic” (1983: 208–14).

### Intellectual Liberation

Several themes emerged in writings by the indigenous educated elite in “British” Melanesia, where national-level government participation was a belated novelty. One of these was intellectual liberation, because as Frantz Fanon argued in his study, *Black Skin White Masks*, colonialism upheld white racial supremacist hegemony through psychological domination as well as forms of coercion. Decolonization would therefore require a synthesis of “modern” and “traditional” knowledge (Gegeo 1998). In 1972, John Saunana, a Solomon

Islander who graduated from UPNG in 1971 and taught there, spoke at the Waigani seminar on “The Politics of Subservience.” Borrowing from Fanon, he said colonialism had inculcated inferiority complexes, so “localization” created “white-masked boot lickers.” Europeans had preached obedience and subverted traditional leadership skills. In World War II, the “mastas” fled from the Japanese, enabling the Maasina Rule movement to regain self-government under hybridized custom. But the returning British arrested the leaders and kept control over indigenous participation; rewarding students with civil service jobs and council seats while warning them not to “rock the boat.” Schools taught “an outmoded pattern of thought that is transplanted on an alien soil and in a rapidly changing society,” ensuring a “piece-meal politics dominated first and foremost by the word complacency.” Yet Saunana believed “educated nationals can translate the multifarious problems of their countrymen into something intelligible, both at the grassroots level, and at national and international levels.” “It was time for the [British] captain to jump ship,” since London “had never in fact tried to develop the islands for Solomon Islanders” (1973: 429–36). In his novel, *The Alternative* (1980), the hero clashed repeatedly with colonial authorities and finally won election to the legislature, as Saunana did himself in 1977.

Warren Paia, a Solomon Islander who also taught at UPNG, cited Saunana and Fanon in KR. He said indigenous leaders should reject colonial brainwashing, take off their white masks, “set some examples for the masses at the grassroots to follow . . . and see what elements of their way of life can be regarded as our national heritage.” They should affirm “Solomon Island culture” not only in arts festivals but in schools, “giving our own writers and poets the chance to promote literary expression” (KR No. 31, October 1972: 7–10). Peter Kenilorea, a future Prime Minister of the Solomons, said terms like Solomonization or self-determination implied a liberation struggle in the “minds of the citizens” against the colonial myth that local cultures were timeless and changeless. Now the colonizers said “they have had enough of it all. That the Solomons is a nation capable of self-respect and national identity.” But imitative institutional freedom “while our mentality is still imprisoned” was “the wrong road,” so a “revolution of mental decolonization,” was needed first, and it “must be deeply marked by our own particularity . . . our humanity in the world of artificiality, materialism and automation. We have our own national identity” (KR No. 30, September 1972: 4–5). Bugotu pinpointed racism: “The trouble with us Solomon Islanders is that we are too black. . . . We were treated as boys rather than men. We were children not knowing what was good for us” (PP, 1973, 79). He said, “we don’t want to be passengers all the time, we want to hold the helm, and you don’t get a sailor able to steer a ship by lecturing to him on land all the time. He is put on the ship and given the wheel, and through rough and fine seas he pushes against the waves” (1969: 555–6). Tapesu Tata of Vanuatu reiterated such ideas

after a radical economic development conference in Port Vila: "Why not change the educational curriculum to suit the environment in which we live . . . you will gain psychological security, because unnecessary fear of the colonizers will disappear" (NHV 10, 1973).

At UPNG, Hannett formed a Niugini Black Power group in 1969, after the West Papua protest. He said the media called them anti-white but they were actually pro-black. Citing Malcolm X, Fanon, Stokely Carmichael, and Négritude writers who promoted pride in black identity, Hannett said, "Niugini's present political state makes Black Power an essential part of nation building—in a sense self-knowledge is the foundation of nationalism." Hannett saw black people everywhere being dominated and exploited by whites, so they had to unite (Ndt, May 1971). Adapting Paulo Freire, he told the 1971 UN Visiting Mission, "The task of the Black Power group is obvious, to redeem ourselves from our oppressors first of all, but in so doing, redeem our oppressors also to the totality of their humanity." Their group was small, but native Niuginians were the majority and were "richly endowed with our own cultural, social and religious values which make us distinct as people or as a race. These values alone give us our corporate personality and identity." "Localization" had put "democratically elected black slave traders in the House of Assembly" because "White Power" ran PNG, from bad mining deals to lower salaries for indigenous civil servants. The Niugini Black Power Movement hoped to create "a Niugini Nation," to "reclaim our history and our identity from what must be called cultural terrorism." He praised local communalism: "In all the micro-cultures of Niuginians there is that latent homogeneity. . . . In nation building such a concept if given positive all-embracing width, would certainly form the genuine foundation of nationalism." Their motto was "Black man, know thyself and act accordingly" (1972: 41–50).

Kasaipwalova joined the Black Power group and wrote in *Nilaidat* on the "Role of Educated Elite," which he called "an exotic house plant." "Governments, armies and corporations," shaped modernity, which in Niugini had created "a form of neo-colonialism floating on foreign investment," leaving "the mass of the population [in] mediocrity. . . . The elite must set a standard for a Niuginian future society" (Ndt, 12, 1971: 9). Colonialism "established a completely new ruling class [and] the new economic system which depends on the making of profit for its very existence. . . . Black Power does not seek to create racial disharmony, but harmony between races. Our present condition is one pregnant with racism. . . . It is white defined by whites, re-inforced by white interests, and maintained primarily for the supremacy of whites" (NGW 3, 1971: 14–15). Jawodinbari said PNG culture was not "some specimen [that] should be preserved in a bottle for exhibition. Every Black man is involved in his culture whether he is aware of it or not [so] it is high time we, the Black people, stood up

bravely and declared that we are human beings with established traditions. . . . Let us prove that we believe in the destiny of the Black man” (Ndt, December 1971). Grace Mera Molisa of Vanuatu, a student at USP in Fiji, noted, “No one has ever labelled the expatriates involved in politics in the New Hebrides white power men. Power is neither black nor white. The only nonentity in New Hebrides is the New Hebridean” (*Unispac* 1975). In KR, secondary school student Andrew Oara’i reported that “colonial attitudes” persisted among expatriates: “They are like roaring lions looking for a chance to jump at their preys. Look out for the enemy. Our own leading men are masking themselves with honorable names like, ‘Elders,’ ‘Experienced Old Timers,’ ‘Retired Civil Servants.’ The collective name which suits them all is really, ‘Products of Colonial ideologies’ [with] black skin like ourselves but beneath that skin are all the elements of the ‘DEVIL himself.’” (KR 45, May 1975).

### **National Unity and Identity**

The UN promoted the preservation of national territorial integrity to avert fragmentation, yet in culturally diverse Melanesia, breakaway movements remained a threat, for example in the western Solomon Islands in 1977 (Premdas et al. 1984). Nation building required a process of unification by activist elites, but gradual institutional reforms by Australia and Britain in PNG and the Solomons were designed to defuse militant nationalism, whereas French reluctance to decolonize in Vanuatu (and New Caledonia) fueled stronger liberation movements (McIntyre 2014; Connell 1988). After postindependence challenges to national unity, historian Tarcisius Kabutaulaka of the Solomon Islands theorized that national states would have to bridge both the regional superstructure of Melanesia and the grassroots substructure of many linguistic “nations” (*wan-toks*): “The states of Melanesia must rethink their concepts and redefine their nationhood in order to strengthen both internal unity and Melanesian solidarity. There is more to a nation than the boundaries and interests of a state” (1994, 78). Havini of PNG had proposed a voluntary Melanesian federation “that might benefit ‘the whole of Melanesia’” by giving it more clout, like the European Common Market, while protecting local rights (1973: 103–5). The Melanesian Spearhead Group would form in 1987 to support the Kanak liberation movement in New Caledonia, but when Bougainville tried to secede militarily from PNG in 1988, negotiators found it hard to resolve the crisis. After peacekeepers left, they were needed to end the Solomon Islands civil war (Kabutaulaka 2005). Vanuatu had become independent in 1980, despite two secession movements, but PNG troops had to intercede to enable the Lini regime to preserve unity, because the new national elites feared a potential domino effect (Van Trease 1987).

At the 1972 Waigani Seminar, three PNG presenters reported that local councils remained suspicious of the central government. Ebia Olewale said the police, army, and the university were “alien to the village way of life. They have been imposed from without” and left villagers “to wonder at it all.” The “white man’s education” lured away children to become “stateless persons,” whose “future profession will require them to live in an urban area.” Olewale warned, “Our future is tied up with the land. We must make village life appeal to the people.” Elijah Titus warned that university students proposed innovations that made village leaders feel a threat to their own status, so expatriate officers propagandized “that university students are just ‘stirrers’ and ‘bigheads’ who are too young to make decisions and are just showing off. . . . why are students so reluctant to carry knives and axes, hoes and shovels, to work in the hot day?” The university should instead engage in organized outreach programs and “provide impetus for nationalism.” Titus said studying what had happened elsewhere in Africa, Asia, South America, or other Pacific islands would be better than trying to turn Papua New Guineans into “brown Australians.” The people searched for a “common identity,” because “the concept of nation was not part of our tradition.” J.K. Nombri said “the House of Assembly and the university are just names or sounds that do not convey anything at all to villagers;” some thought those institutions were in Australia (1972). There was talk of decentralization through creating provincial assemblies, but KR said PNG’s coercive response to secessionism on Bougainville showed that it preferred centralization (KR 43, May–June 1974). Barak Sope of Vanuatu said education might help decentralization, but the risk was, “The central government may be controlled primarily by commercial interests” thereby creating “neo-colonialism” (1977, 113).

Martin Buluna wrote in *Nilaidat* that “effective nationalism” in PNG, “is as yet non-existent. Niugini is a colonial country,” because dependent leaders in a “mediatory position between the government and the people cannot spearhead a nationalistic movement.” The educated elite were “the future, true leaders of Niugini,” but they had to become “a united political pressure group” (Ndt 2:4, July 10, 1969). Bart Philemon was optimistic, since education helped to cure indigenous people of their awe of white men: “The young New Guineans are in the ascendant” (Ndt 1:8, September 4, 1968). PNG legal reformer Bernard Narokobi would even propose a synthesized “Melanesian Way,” which might build consensus through negotiation (1980). In Vanuatu, J.T. Lulu said mobility was developing new layers of identity:

Nowadays New Hebrides men and women go from their families, their clans and their districts to other places to work for the good of people who are not their “wantoks”! New Hebrides is growing up [into] a nation. We must think about our country . . . we should be proud of

what we are BECAUSE we are first New Hebridean. I believe we can do this . . . we are one people (NHV 11, October 1973)

Molisa blamed disunity in Vanuatu on the dual colonial administration and lack of schools: “The Colonial Administration did not offer any substantial education to the New Hebrideans until the last ten years. Even now there is only one fully fledged English speaking High School and one French speaking” (*Unispac* 1975). KR called efforts by leaders to educate the public about the proposed constitution a “big flop,” because officials lectured the people instead of discussing: “only by stepping outside the framework of orthodox economic thought and examining these possibilities can we begin to prepare adequately for tomorrow” (KR 36, March 1973). “We want dialogue so we can have our say too. After all, where is the Melanesian Way?” Leaders should dialogue more closely with civil society: “We cannot discover other options and decide our future in a ‘Melanesian way’ if we are addressed to all the time by politicians” (KR 46, July 1975). After the Solomon Islands civil war of 1998–2003, indigenous analysts and conciliators recommended the same approach (Kabutaulaka 2005, *Pacific Islands Report* [PIR] “Traditional Governance Policy,” August 16, 2016).

*Nilaidat* writers tried to navigate the distinction between nationalism and subnational “regionalism.” In 1968, Bougainvilleans in Port Moresby proposed a referendum to decide if they wanted to remain part of PNG, be independent, or join the western Solomon Islands. Hannett said Bougainvilleans had more familial exchanges and racial ties to western Solomon Islanders than to PNG (*Pacific Islands Monthly* [PIM], November 1968, 26). An illustrated cover of *Nilaidat* portrayed Hannett and Morgan, the former in a military uniform with medals and a skull and crossed bones on his hat as President of Bougainville, and the latter in a camouflaged uniform as Prime Minister (Ndt 1:9, October 1968). Morgan initially supported the breakaway effort to redress neglect, but he opposed the referendum, because Bougainville needed to be better developed first. He said that if Bougainville joined the Solomons, Bougainville might wind up supporting the Solomons, when PNG had more economic potential and also Australian aid (PIM, February 1969). PNG assemblymen accused Bougainvilleans of being selfish about keeping more mining revenues, but Somare said, “I trust the people of Bougainville.” Before PNG’s independence in 1975, Somare negotiated with several separatist movements to preserve unity, offering them more voice and revenues (1975: 67–68, 122–8). But Havini accused PNG of regarding Bougainville “to be secondary to the needs of the Territory” (Ndt 2:5, August 1969). He called Bougainville the “forgotten island”; it wanted to secede “instead of living on the scraps left behind by big capitalist enterprises” (1973: 103–5). Some observers said the Solomons were

too small and should join PNG, but KR proposed a union of the Solomons with Bougainville, not PNG. The Solomons would gain “economic independence” from the mine revenues, and Bougainville would get more money than PNG permitted (KR 43, May–June 1974). Hannett remained pro-independence, so Somare “appointed this angry, table-thumping man as my special adviser on Bougainvillean affairs” (1975: 67–68, 117). Hannett became a planner for the provincial assembly of the renamed “North Solomons Province” and a re-negotiator of the mining agreement. Havini became executive officer for local councils on Bougainville, and his wife created the Bougainville flag, but he was wounded by PNG police. He later served as speaker of the provincial assembly in the early 1980s, with Hannett as premier.

Regarding national cultural identity, KR ran this joke about the arrogance of the so-called “civilizing mission”: a monkey once saw a fish swimming in a stream and said to it, “For your own good, I must save you from drowning.” The monkey then lifted the fish out of water and put it on a tree branch (KR 7, September 1970). A teacher training college student urged people to call themselves “Solomon Islanders” and to mix more in sports teams, as ethnic groups in Honiara did (KR 4, June 1970). Raraka felt that mixed sports teams could create “better unity spirit through healthy inter-school competition and relationships,” yet rival associations might also cause tensions among unemployed youths “who perhaps need the most help to adjust and ‘find themselves.’” “Unity is the word,” he noted. “‘Unity first,’ many people say, ‘before we can talk of independence.’ But who is doing what for unity? What does it really mean for us in the Solomons today? We have so many groups and strange divisions. . . . It is a matter of national planning and concern” (KR No. 21, November 1971).

We went too far, too quickly and without thinking, towards the European way. Unfortunately, we can't stop it. . . . In this situation, we turn again to our customs. We dig up old men to teach us old dances, old ladies to tell stories; if we don't have customs, or we've forgotten them, we invent new ones and say “that is our custom.” We should look at our custom, our traditional ways, as a storeroom of ideas, skills and crafts which we can open and take out for use in our lives today and tomorrow . . . our past is in danger of slipping away from us if we do not study it, practice its arts and skills, learn its songs and dances. We need to know our history to understand ourselves . . . and in the future our children can put their hands into the storeroom (Raraka, ‘One Man's View,’ KR No. 15, May 1971)

In Vanuatu, Molisa said the NP was learning through action: “Nationalism has its roots in rural areas. The vocal Nationalists happen to be in the urban

areas because that is where they need to make their voice heard . . . that is where the body and head of the colonizing octopus is located.” The NP struggle would create something new, she argued:

Our New Hebrides cultures are diverse. . . . Our age old customs and social practices have been massacred by European infiltration, intervention, and oppression. Whatever culture emerges from the past and the present as today’s New Hebrideans evolve it is still custom and New Hebridean no less. Time will give it the brand of approval. However, even if the National Party did break some customs it is time New Hebrideans made their own mistakes (*Unispac* 1975).

“I am a human being who has an identity, a NEW HEBRIDEAN,” Kalkoa wrote. “The struggle for a new society by New Hebrideans is for an identity, self-respect and freedom.” The dual colonizers “have no programme for nationhood. We are not known internationally. The western concept of nationality is wrapped up in flags [but] the Pacific Islander could more easily identify each island territory through its indigenous carving, symbols or emblems than by flags.” Without citizenship, New Hebrideans were “stateless,” so the whole system needed unifying, he said. “These two fairy godmothers” were keeping the country from developing and instead were increasing dependence on British or French aid money. “Oppression is a dehumanized and dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressors and those whom they oppress,” he concluded. “It is the latter who must, from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for humanity” (1975: 84–85). When France tried to delay constitution-making by supporting regional or religious minorities, Niko Vurobaravu wrote, “Nationalists in Vanuaaku will always know where they stand. They will always struggle to achieve their nationalistic ‘unity’: i.e. a common stand or solidarity to attain freedom from any form of colonial or neo-colonial domination before and after independence. THIS SOLIDARITY IS INVINCIBLE!” (VV 9:1, March 1979).

### **Development and Education**

At the 1972 Waigani seminar, Father John Momis said development in PNG was “confused,” because the promises about modernization “do not seem to be coming to fruition.” He wanted not only economic but spiritual, intellectual, and political progress: “We want to contribute to our own civilization. We do not want to operate within a pre-structured, prefabricated system imposed on us by our expatriate educators.” Social justice and freedom must coexist, because Melanesians were egalitarians, but under Australian rule “we are creating a society which will be dominated by the privileged few even when the

expatriates go: it will be dominated by privileged black capitalists [so] let us shift this social power from the apex to the base” (Momis 1973: 447–50). Momis believed that “demands for secession, autonomy, restrictions on the powers of the central government” were really traceable to the need for PNG to control its own development and “change the existing foreign imposed systems which are widely recognized as being inappropriate to our needs.” World economic pressures should be balanced by “a policy of self-reliance in basic products,” to avoid “pollution of the environment, the disruption of traditional systems and values . . . the alienation of man, and the exploitation of the poor by the rich” (Momis 1975: 81–83). He told a story about an Australian and a Niuginian who wanted to visit an outer island. The Aussie disliked the canoe because it was too slow, so they took a motorboat, but the engine broke down. The Aussie blamed the Niuginian, who replied, “It’s not my fault, it’s yours. The thing has stopped, and I don’t know how to handle it, because we have no sail or paddles.” Momis explained, “many times we have been required to operate within a structure which has no basis in our culture. We must be the point of reference. We do not want to be marginal people,” but Westerners provided “the perfect answers to the wrong questions!” (1973: 447–50).

In KR, A. Fegeta warned that Solomon Islanders in their “small and scattered islands . . . must be sure if the Solomons is really ready to handle independence, and that these ideas are in line with future prosperity of our people. We want a spread out development,” not “money devouring projects of ‘Americanizing’ our towns” (KR 10, December 1970). Bugotu argued that “Urban problems are created. . . . Our acceptance of this ‘civilised’ way of life makes these problems part of us and we part of them.” Leaders invited foreign “expert town planners, sociologists and psycho-analysts [but] should planning be modeled from outside or from within?” Could leaders “bring into town-life some of the quality and character of village life?” Might “friendly inter-relations with sharing and personal interdependence” remedy “imported” selfish egotism and segregation? A young urbanite wanted a motor-bike for status: “He is in fact the laziest character in town.” The rural migrant is “bewildered,” but he “works harder than the town lad and so settles down better.” Bugotu said urbanization should be “modern, but Melanesian in character” (KR No. 18, August 1971: 10–12). Francis Saemala, a student in New Zealand, liked the idea of linking “village life and urban ‘confusion,’” but preachers still told people “their ways are unchristian, backward and old-fashioned [so] to be a good christian one must necessarily be europeanised.” People had to choose wisely whatever may help them in the “modern world” (KR No. 20, October 1971: 7–8). Bugotu wrote, “We must know that what is Melanesian can be modern and what is modern is not necessarily Western. . . . Let’s draw our own plans and map out our own strategies. Let’s get information flows to the grass-roots. Let us study village economy and

dynamics and make them live” (KR No. 34, January 1973: 15–17). KR satirized some urban stereotypes: the idle Honiara Cowboy who wore imported hats and belts, played a guitar and cheered for the good guys in movies (KR 10, December 1970); the expatriate “Jolly Clubmen” who spent their time, even during work hours, drinking in bars and were unlikely to return to their home country where they might have to work (KR 12, March 1971); the Town Drunk, who on pay day had too much beer, staggered and shouted nonsense, neglected his wife and family, and created a bad image for Solomon Islanders (KR 16, June 1971); and the Politician, who spoke not to express truth or goodness but rather to get what he wanted from the British political system (KR 46, July 1975). KR also mocked perspiring people in suits, ties, underwear, and shoes at official meetings or cocktail parties (KR 30, September 1972).

Donald Kalpokas of Vanuatu spoke at UPNG about “Community Development.” He said that the dual administration and rival missions had divided the people in the New Hebrides, which “is an agricultural country, with a subsistence economy and copra as its main cash produce.” The colonial school system left many twelve year olds unable to return to village life and stigmatized as failures, so they went off to towns without necessary job skills. But the teacher training college was sending people back to the villages to teach, the agriculture department was training and sending staff out for field work, and the medical department trained dressers and nurses to work in village dispensaries, clinics, and hospitals. The NP was the only organized party, and it recommended that New Hebrideans should form cooperatives instead of leaving the economy to foreigners (1975: 671–2). The Vanuaku Pati rejected “a neo-colonial road.” “Communal land ownership,” it argued, “conforms to the traditions of the people—it also lays the basis for a more egalitarian society, avoiding the traps of a privileged Black elite arising to step into the white colon’s shoes” (VV 8: 3, January–February 1978). The NP promoted respect for indigenous custom, proposing “Melanesian Socialism,” which was similar to Julius Nyerere’s experiment in African Socialism in Tanzania, because it sought to raise to the national-level indigenous traditions of communal sharing in villages and families (Premdas 1987). KR recommended a community development approach to link the towns and the villages, if extension service officers were trained to ask villagers what their needs were and facilitated that process rather than imposing top-down projects that wasted money (KR 12 February 1971). That idea was later revived by David Gegeo (1998). KR told a fictional story about a Development Committee that was looking for new sources of revenue. They asked the advice of outside experts, who suggested doing a survey to find out how much “nodi” the country had. But local critics complained, “You have sold our birthright of nodi to foreigners, and they will take the nodi out of our children’s mouths and give us nothing in return.” The ensuing “great

nodis survey row” became a political issue about executive vs. legislative powers, rivalries among politicians who often switched sides in Parliament to suit their own ambitions, and lack of consultation with the people, so ultimately nothing happened, and “everyone lived happily ever after [in] a place that does not exist” (KR 20, October 1971: 3–5).

In *One Talk* in 1968, Lini had asked the question, “Why should I be educated?” In the past, he wrote, the “Melanesian lived a life of self satisfaction and self sufficiency [but] change has made Melanesia more like the rest of the world . . . in this day and age my being educated is so that I can specialize in a job from which I can earn my living” (OT, February 1968: 18–20). Ruben Taylor said vocational training was needed, because not all graduates could get the white collar jobs they had learned to aspire to (OT, June 1968, No. 4: 7–8). Habu reported that “300 students have been sent overseas by business, government, and the Missions from the Solomons. Of these the majority are in technical institutes in New Guinea, Australia, Fiji, and New Zealand.” Yet too many technocrats might reproduce “such social injustices as snobbery, discrimination, unemployment, etc. Is technological advancement the only value on which a developing country depends? I do not believe that Jesus was simply a carpenter” (OT October 1968, No. 6: 7–8). Lini said the Anglican Church wanted to teach New Hebridean Culture in its schools, but what was that exactly and how should it be taught, since eighty islands with 86,000 inhabitants spoke eighty languages? They invited custom chiefs to suggest ideas: traditional songs, dances, and stories that taught proper obedience and portrayed laziness and theft negatively, genealogy to inculcate respect for the family, peace keeping customs, punishments for not being peaceful, handicrafts, and the names of things in their own language. Lini held several customary titles and argued that a chief had to have sound character and serve his people well to earn respect. He endorsed ceremonial pig killing, because its symbolism would help preserve the chieftaincy (NHV 5, January 1972, Lini 1980: 10–11). Kalkoa wrote, “The oppressors used to say we were unproductive, lacked aggressiveness, were discouraged and neglected, lazy and drunkards, and that is why our country is being developed without us. It is all lies, we were exploited. To France and Britain, you have brought us this far, you have made us what we are, let us see if you can pull us out of this hell” (1975: 84–85).

Education for development has gone through recurring cycles of policy proposals. Renagi Lohia of PNG complained that Australian teachers came on short contracts, and just when they began to be useful, having adapted to local conditions, they went home. Niuginians should replace them, and university students needed to “unite and be realistic instead of sitting back and assuming that things will naturally work perfectly for us” (Ndt, February 1971). Kasaipwalova said that when he went home, people expected him to help them “take control

of our economy from the white man. . . . We should have an education where we can share as well as learn” (1975). L. Tagaro of Vanuatu argued, “we must be educated and above all practice Western life in rhythm with our own culture . . . we hope for the young men and women to come from Universities and lead us [but] have they had any means of learning the history of our ancestral warriors and philosophers?” Otherwise, “we will be moving along with modern civilization faster than we can really comprehend it” (NHV 6, February 1972). In a 1973 report, Bugotu asked a question from his MA thesis: “Education for What?” The study proposed adapting school curricula to local needs and cultures “as well as the demands of a twentieth century society and the outside world” (1975, 156). But Kenilorea cautioned about “Solomonizing” too much, because they had to “face a world of nations, universal technological advancements, human pride, social prestige, human acquisitiveness and man’s competitive spirit” (PP 5: 3, 1976: 3–8). By 1983, Bugotu lamented that “the devolution of powers and decentralization of services into the provinces” had been “misunderstood or abused” by corrupt local leaders, and his education report was marginalized by a uniform program based on global standards, increasing youth unemployment (1983). A decade later, Stanley Houma again called for more balanced and “relevant education,” because learning should prepare students to return to their villages to help with development (Houma 1997: 172–4). More vocational training for agriculture and rural enterprises was needed, because colonial education was socialization for dependency on imports. “Even fourteen years after independence, formal education is still not relevant for the majority of Solomon islanders, rather it contributes to their alienation from their communities and the continuing colonization of their minds.”

Educated women also voiced their concerns. In 1970, Meg Taylor, future president of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, admitted “there is no present role filled by women” in PNG politics, but better access to education might enable women to enter the House of Assembly, perhaps through reserved seats: “It should be respected that the women are not only the mothers of the country, but are the cultural carriers and repository of the lore of the tribe” (Ndt 3:1, July 30, 1970: 1–3). By 1972, Josephine Abaijah was the first woman in the legislature, and other women would win election or serve as provincial governors. But some male nationalists saw Western-educated women as “inauthentic” (Dickson-Waiko 2013). Hilda Lini was assistant editor of *NHV*, and Molisa reported on international women’s conferences in Mexico City and Australia. She said, “women from the rich and advanced Nations have a different view” that stressed equality, “while women of the poorer Nations place emphasis on political, economic and total human liberations.” In Vanuatu, both men and women had to struggle for progress, while women liberated themselves from within (*Unispac* 1975). The NP organized

Women's Conferences, because traditional and Christian patriarchal attitudes had mentally "enslaved" them, so they needed to reeducate themselves and the men (VV 9:1 March 1979). Gwen Sarufi of Solomon Islands wrote, "In Melanesia women are thought of as inferior to men. But it is about time we realized that both men and women have equal rights and responsibilities" (OT, February 1968 No. 2: 14). Seventeen female students from the Solomons said girls were running away from home to schools: "As the country is developing, villages need more educated women to become mothers, teachers, nurses and women's leaders. Why? In order to help raise the standard of living." Even if married, they could "still be an important influence in our community to run clubs, dispensaries, and become Mothers' Union leaders . . . we shall expect to be treated as equals with boys of a similar background and given opportunities and responsibilities" (OT April 1968 No. 3: 22–23). Another woman wrote, "you men of Honiara better decide what qualities you really want instead of accepting European values and expecting us women to remain true to custom" (OT, October 1968: 14).

### Epilogue

Clearly, indigenous leaders sought ways to liberate their countries while combining aspects of traditional custom with modern development, but how strong a nation-state did colonizers really want to encourage, when their self-interests favored "free trade" by outside companies and, if needed, sending in peacekeepers to restore "order"? In 1973, Bugotu said,

Neo-colonialism is disguised behind clever and effective manipulation and planned role-playing [hiding] paternalistic attitudes. This is true not only of the Solomons but also of Papua New Guinea and the New Hebrides . . . neo-colonialism aims at serving first of all western strategic, economic and political interests. The "native elite" in the Solomon Islands is derived from the same process as in Africa, alienating the "educated," through foreign schooling, from village life (1973: 77, 79)

In 1997, Kabutaulaka wrote, "many Solomon Islanders still have inferior perceptions of themselves as compared to Europeans." He urged his people to complete their own liberation: "Decolonization should be as much a process of rediscovering one's dignity as it is of making constitutional changes. Independence, therefore, is only the beginning of that process, not the end" (1997: 165–71). In 1982, Stephen Pokawin of UPNG argued, "the lack of major changes in the inherited institutions have been caused by lack of political will and initiative from both leaders and the population. The government failed to push to implement the

nationalistic sentiments found in the constitution.” But provincial governments, village associations and trade unions still protest, because “the authorities give attention to those who make much noise” (1982, 47). Fifteen years later, Rona Nadile of PNG told a story about a hen who had raised some ducklings—until they finally realized they were not chickens! “Colonial political, bureaucratic and socio-economic systems and structures continue to be regenerated,” she said. We have grown accustomed to our colonial heritage. What happened to the graduates, the intellectuals?” Colonialism had created “intellectual dependency,” but she still hoped that through education, “confidence in the intellectual capacity of the people can be rebuilt and restored” (1997: 175–9). Molisa of Vanuatu once wrote, “Neo-Colonialism [is] a parasite accommodated by hosts open and susceptible to external influences, usually certain well-trained colonial civil-servants and weak politicians” (1983, 37). Twenty years later, she still hoped that women would gain more political voice and that civil society would participate more in decision making, so that “we can evolve our own brand of governance that is uniquely ours” (2002).

### NOTES

JPH: *Journal of Pacific History*, Canberra: Australian National Univ.

KR: *The Kakamora Reporter* Honiara Monthly 1970–75.

Ndt: *Nilaidat*, UPNG newspaper 1968–71.

NHV: *New Hebrides Viewpoints*, newspaper of the Vanuaaku Pati 1971–75.

OT: *One Talk*, Auckland WSPA monthly 1967–69.

PIM: *Pacific Islands Monthly* magazine, Sydney.

PIR: *Pacific Islands Report*, East–West Center, Honolulu.

PP: *Pacific Perspective*, periodical of University of the South Pacific, Fiji, 1972–79.

VV: *Vanuaaku Viewpoints*, newspaper of the Vanuaaku Pati.

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