

in recent times have proclaimed the goal of matching anthropological insights with historical questions and giving the inside view of the European encounter. This one at least is true to that aspiration.

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The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands. By Jon Fraenkel. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2004. 262 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-86473-487-5.

JON FRAENKEL'S *THE MANIPULATION OF CUSTOM: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands* is an in-depth overview of the Solomon Islands' 'ethnic tension crisis' (as it is still widely termed within the Solomons), from its ostensible beginning in 1998 with the eviction of some 25,000 Malaitans from north Guadalcanal by the militant Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army, through the Townsville Peace Agreement in October 2000 between the GRA/Isatabu Freedom Movement and the Malaita Eagle Force, through the first year of the July 2003 intervention of the Australian-led multinational Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which continues today. The perspective is largely that of political science, concentrating on the interaction of government, militant groups, civil society, Melanesian 'custom' and international players, particularly Australia and Taiwan.

As one who lived through the last nine years in the Solomons, I would say that Fraenkel's argument and perspective are basically correct. I see little to fault. In a brisk narrative, he produces a fairly full account of the increasing corruption of Solomon Islands political life in which insatiable greed has come to replace public service and honesty, especially among elected politicians. It is not a happy story. To some extent, even the invitation to RAMSI to rescue the Solomons from its state of lawlessness and terminal corruption had motives of self-interest.

Fraenkel has no simplistic explanations. He refuses either to affirm the conflict as entirely 'ethnic' (an explanation largely favoured by the international media) or to deny the ethnic element in favour of an entirely economic analysis (an explanation favoured by some commentators on the political left). Nor does he buy the current view of certain Australian policy planners that the Solomons never had any effective government, whether in the protectorate or independence era, and that the current morass is just more of the same, only worse. Quite correctly, he points out that Solomon Islanders have always taken their government seriously, indigenizing it and shaping it to meet local needs. He is ambivalent about (if not mildly hostile to) RAMSI, noting 'the oxymoronic policy of intervention to enable self-government' (p.173). And as the title of the book indicates, he correctly points out that *kastom* is not some sort of pure cultural given, set against government or militant demands, but something constantly being redefined (indeed, in this case, manipulated) by them.

This is a good frame upon which to hang further research. I would simply emphasize that there is still very much more research to be done, particularly outside the public record, upon which this book depends a bit too much. Inevitably, as this research is done, a much more detailed analysis will emerge and the frame itself will change. Reading the book, I frequently felt, 'Something is missing here — what is written is correct, but there is still more'. In the end, analysis also has to go beyond politics to issues of culture and religion.

At times Fraenkel seems not to want to take his argument to its logical conclusion. For example, the Solomons' political situation *is* complex and murky, with very

strange alliances emerging, usually for (very large) financial gain. Therefore, there *are* conspiracies, and they need to be uncovered. By definition, conspiracies are usually outside the public record. In the very first stages of the GRA militant movement there was clearly some involvement of Honiara-based Malaita politicians, perhaps with the extraction of Guadalcanal timber in mind. The earliest leaders were not in the movement for ethnic reasons — the GRA leader Andrew Te'e, for example, is half Malaitan and even Harold Keke has a Malaitan wife. However, once the ethnic card was played, there was a rapid re-organization of alliances.

The same is true in trying to fathom Australia's refusal to intervene during the Ulufa'alu and Sogavare regimes and its fairly docile acceptance of the 2000 coup against Ulufa'alu, despite making a lot of noise, ordering Australian and other expatriates home and, in the process, creating a national crisis out of what had been a conflict only on Guadalcanal. Despite Ulufa'alu's new monetary reformist ways, it would appear that Australia did not trust him, perhaps because of his labour union background and continued identification with the left (for example, his threat to appeal to Cuba for peacekeeping forces). The Australian constitutional advisor provided to the Governor-General counseled that just a bit of democracy (a parliamentary selection of a new prime minister under duress) was enough and there was no need to try to restore Ulufa'alu. Australia's interest was stability rather than democracy.

As Fraenkel correctly points out, Kemakeza, as peace negotiator between both Guadalcanal and Malaita militant factions, became their friend and his government included them and met their needs — until the price became too high. In a very Melanesian way, the Townsville Peace Agreement did bring about a friendship between the Guadalcanal and Malaita militants that is easy to miss. For example, in Malaita, the most common explanation of the Selwyn Saki killing allegedly by the MEF Supreme Command was that it was a contract killing done on behalf of certain Guadalcanal ex-militants unhappy with Saki's heavy-handed ways, a product of post-TPA Malaita-Guadalcanal militant friendship. This friendship continues in Rove prison today.

In the end, what is hidden will not be revealed until there are many more in-depth interviews with all the people involved — the Governor-General, the ex-militants, politicians and civil servants, witnesses to certain events, retired diplomats and advisors — and until upcoming court trials. Even explanations and motives of the Civil Society Network need to be closely looked at, given the political aspirations of some of those involved in it.

I found only one clear factual error. Former MEF General Secretary and now imprisoned MP, Alex Bartlett, represents the Small Malaita constituency, not West Are Are (p.169). There are a few other small points. Ethnic strife did not always result in the failure of Malaita-Guadalcanal mixed marriages; many Malaita men brought their Guadalcanal wives back to Malaita. Civil society (as opposed to the Civil Society Network) was represented at the Townsville Peace Agreement at least in the person of the Anglican Archbishop of Melanesia, Sir Ellison Pogo. International Peace Monitoring Team weapon containers were also provided in Auki, in addition to Rove and Tetere, and remained unmolested until finally removed by RAMSI. Relations between Marau on West Guadalcanal and West Are Are continue to this day and there were some returnees from Marau to West Are Are also. In a clear case of armed robbery, in August 2000 the MEF leadership came to Auki and stole *all* of the SI\$5m compensation paid by Guadalcanal Province to Malaita Province, SI\$1m of which had been earmarked for the Malaita Council of Chiefs. Virtually the entire former MEF Supreme Council now faces criminal charges for this theft. And *pigin*, which persists throughout the book, is a very peculiar spelling of the Solomons' lingua franca, *pijin*.

If this book leans any way, it is ever so slightly towards Guadalcanal, with fuller and more complete explanations of the Guadalcanal perspective. But it is basically quite

fair. It should be read with Clive Moore's recently released *Happy Isles in Crisis: the historical causes for a failing state in the Solomon Islands, 1998–2004*, which leans slightly in the opposite direction, with fuller explanations of the Malaita perspective.

Finally, written from afar, the book does not entirely capture the devastation, fear and sadness the whole crisis brought to many families and individuals in the Solomons, still experienced today, a weakness shared by the current political positions of some Solomon Islanders who sat out the crisis overseas in Australia or Fiji. But with its balanced fairness and clear analysis, this is an important contribution to healing and to the development of mature political leadership in the Solomon Islands.

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Dissolving Dream: The Improbable Story of the First Baptist Maori Mission. By R.F. Keam. Published by the author, 2004. 236 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-47600-421-7.

MISSIONARY HISTORY IN NEW ZEALAND remains a surprisingly underwritten field. With the notable exception of studies relating to the Anglican Williams family (some of those generated by interest in the Treaty of Waitangi), there has been limited critical attention to these pioneers in cultural encounter. Judith Binney's early work on Kendall and Yate and Anne Salmond's broader studies are obvious exceptions and J.M.R. Owen's recent study of Richard Taylor is welcome. Physicist Ron Keam, renowned for his work on geothermal areas, has gathered a remarkable body of material on one of the more obscure missionary ventures. Baptists in New Zealand do not have the missionary history of Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and Mormons. They typically found their own way to the colony and gradually gathered in largely Pakeha churches. The exception was a brief work at Te Wairoa near Rotorua, a location made famous not by the mission, but by its devastation in the Tarawera eruption of 1886. Indeed, it is through this link that Keam's study was generated. In 1988 he published an award-winning study of the eruption itself.

This volume has a different focus but is just as exhaustive. Keam traces the stories of those who shaped the Te Wairoa mission. First among these were William and Anstis Snow, an American couple who came to New Zealand in 1880 for the sake of William's health. Like many others they visited the famous Pink and White Terraces, encountering and observing Maori life along the way. William Snow was a social activist from a family associated with the movement to abolish slavery. Disturbed at what he saw as exploitation of Maori by liquor merchants he began a temperance campaign, helped found the Maori language newspaper *Te Korimako* and sought the establishment of a settled Christian mission in the area. Eventually sponsorship was offered by the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle and its new minister, Thomas Spurgeon. A graduate from Spurgeon's famous father's college in London, Alfred Fairbrother, was appointed missionary and the work began in 1882. Snow died early in 1883, soon after leaving New Zealand. His wife, Anstis, returned to New Zealand for a visit in 1884. The mission was making little progress. Fairbrother, who had no significant prior contact with Maori, appears not to have worked sympathetically with the local population. The situation was made worse by criticism of Fairbrother by a fellow worker, Clara Haszard. Keam argues that Haszard resented the relationship which developed between Fairbrother and Anstis Snow and which culminated in their marriage in May 1885. In the meantime, the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle was becoming disillusioned with progress at the mission. It ceased its sponsorship in December 1885. By the time the settlement at Te Wairoa was overwhelmed