

South-West Pacific Research: Trends and Suggestions*

Andrew Strathern** and Pamela J. Stewart***

Introduction

Here we discuss the area of the Pacific that we refer to as the South-West Pacific. This includes the islands of New Guinea, the Solomons, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji.¹ This part of the Pacific has often been described as “Melanesia” in the literature. Throughout the South-West Pacific we find a great linguistic diversity, including speakers of both non-Austronesian languages and Austronesian languages. Austronesian speakers are found across the Pacific stretching from Taiwan, among the indigenous peoples, throughout South-East Asia across to the island of Madagascar off the eastern coast of the continent of Africa.

The names that have been given to the islands of the South-West Pacific and the designations of different geographical areas in ethnological terms have been partly a product of colonial exploration and control as well as of the classifications made by anthropologists, linguists, and others. The provenance and importation of such names is clear by the examples of New

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** Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh.

*** Research Associate, Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh.

¹ Many references to the literature and further details on the South-West Pacific can be found in “Part I. The South-West Pacific” in “Oceania: An Introduction to the Cultures and Identities of Pacific Islanders” (Strathern et al. 2002).

Britain and New Ireland (both located in Papua New Guinea), the New Hebrides, and New Caledonia. The colonial history of these areas has played a significant role in the development of ethnographic work in the region. For example, Papua, the southern half of what is now the State of Papua New Guinea, was originally a British colony and for this reason was visited by the Torres Straits scientific expedition from England in 1898 in which the ethnologist Alfred Cort Haddon played a prominent part. In some areas, the metropolitan influences of a colonial or ex-colonial power remain pervasive, as in the example of New Caledonia where the French influence is still dominant.

The country of Papua New Guinea became independent from Australia in 1975 and the western half of New Guinea, known as Irian Jaya (or West Papua), was a Dutch colony up to 1962 when Indonesia took control of the country. But since 1964 there has been an indigenous movement for self-determination in West Papua, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Organization for Papuan Freedom), whose members have clashed repeatedly with the Indonesian military. In Fiji, arguments about political rights have in the last quarter of the twentieth century taken the form of questions of the relationship between Pacific islander Fijians and the Indian Fijian population which the British originally brought in to Fiji as a labor force on sugar plantations in colonial times. New Caledonia has also been a site of arguments about self-determination and the relationship between French settlers and the indigenous peoples who were given the name of Kanaks.

From the history of the South-West Pacific we can see that the ethnographic information on the region is important in understanding the contemporary struggles, conflicts, and issues among the peoples living today throughout the area. The societies of this region tend to enter into the world news only when there is trouble in them, such as interethnic conflicts or natural disasters such as tsunamis. Because of the inter-connections between events and processes in all parts of the world nowadays there is a

need to understand local cultural and social processes within diverse geographical regions. Ethnographic research is important in helping to promote knowledge of these areas in wider global contexts and in comparative analysis to understand commonalities and differences in processes of social change.

Owing to the great diversity of languages and forms of kinship and descent, as well as practices of gift exchange between persons and groups, the South-West Pacific has been an area of particular interest to linguists and socio-cultural anthropologists over the years. It has been estimated that approximately 1200 languages exist within the South-West Pacific (Foley 2000: 358) and that around 900 languages are found on the island of New Guinea (Pawley 1998), of which 150 are classified as Austronesian languages and 750 as non-Austronesian languages. In terms of kinship and descent within the South-West Pacific it is imperative to remember that these remain basic frameworks for Pacific people in understanding their world and acting within it. Finally, it is important here for us to remember that in addition to the written histories of the Pacific Islands there is a rich set of oral histories that Pacific Island peoples have about themselves (see for example, Stewart and Strathern 2000a).

Brief Overview of the South-West Pacific Islands

1. New Guinea

New Guinea is a huge tropical island that sits north of Australia, straddling an area between the Pacific region and the Indonesian archipelago. Its western half, Irian Jaya (West Papua) formerly a Dutch colony, is a province within the Republic of Indonesia, while its eastern part, Papua New Guinea, has been an independent nation-state since 1975. Some ten thousand years ago the island was joined by the Sahul land bridge to the continent of Australia. Much more recently (1884-1906), the southern part of Papua New Guinea was a British, then (1906-1975) an Australian, colony; while the northern half was administered by Australia under mandate from

the League of Nations and later the United Nations after withdrawal by the Germans in 1920 following World War I (Souter 1967: 263-7).

New Guinea is thus a land that has been divided in complex ways by colonial and post-colonial history. But its great interior valleys, mountain ranges, rivers, and coastal swamps and plains have their own much longer history of change, including the development over many thousands of years of the lifeways of its peoples, with their multiplicities of languages, cosmologies, social forms, indigenous environmental adaptations, and struggles for prestige and power among themselves. Today these long-established indigenous complexities are overlain by and blended with a mass of changes whose reach has extended into every sphere of life. One of the characteristics of people in many parts of New Guinea is their ability to embrace novelties while still staying linked to their pasts and looking forward to the future (see for example, Strathern and Stewart 1999a, 2000a, 2000b).

The linguistic diversity of New Guinea should not be underestimated. However, areas containing distinct languages may show cultural similarities; and in some parts, notably the interior highlands, large language groups of up to 200,000 persons may be found. The smaller language groups also tend to be waning in population today as a result of out-migration and amalgamation, and the increasing use of *linguae francae* such as Tok Pisin (“Pidgin English”) in Papua New Guinea.

Pigs are very important as wealth objects throughout New Guinea. Also a variety of sea shells, imported into the interior of the island through intricate networks of trade routes, were in the past significant. The pathways of trade through which these items moved blended with or emerged into the staging of large-scale festive communal events in which complex processes of social life were negotiated and social values affirmed. Wealth items were also deeply involved in life-cycle rituals marking birth, weaning, adolescence, marriage, maturity, old age, and death. These rituals wove people and their places together in a tapestry of kinship and marriage, seen

as a product of the flow of life-giving and life-enhancing substances (see for example, Stewart and Strathern 1998, 2002a; Strathern and Stewart 1999b, 2000c).

The Highlands areas have a much shorter time span of contact with the outside world than do the coastal regions. On the other hand they show early dates of human settlement, reaching back to 30,000 years or more before the present, comparable to those found for the Huon peninsula on the northern coast. Moreover, archaeological work at Kuk in the Mount Hagen area has demonstrated that the cultivation of crops for subsistence there goes back at least as far as 6,000 years and possibly 9,000 years, making it one of the more ancient centers of the development of agriculture in the world (see Kirch 2000: 63-84; Strathern and Stewart 1998).

Australian explorers entered into the Highlands areas from the south and from the north in the 1920s and early 1930s, finding large, flourishing populations of people with fields of sweet potatoes, well-organized and sometimes warlike (see Leahy 1991; Schieffelin and Crittenden 1990; and Sinclair 1988). The coastal areas in all parts of New Guinea experienced early on the effects of Christian missionization and the introduction of new ideas and rules about work, time, the spirit world, heaven and hell, gender relations, and new forms of clothing. In these times missionaries frequently attacked and prohibited many of the people's festivals and rituals, hoping to substitute these with Christian worship in churches. In subsequent generations and especially after Independence in 1975 in Papua New Guinea people have quite often taken to reviving transformed versions of their festivals and dances, sometimes with church support.

Colonial history in what is now Irian Jaya (West Papua) follows a similar pattern to that in Papua New Guinea. The Dutch first laid claims to the area in 1848 as a part of the Netherlands East Indies. Military and civil explorations further into the interior followed. Aircraft were used to penetrate into the central highlands from the 1920s onwards. Although the Baliem Valley area and the Asmat area on the southern coast are relatively

well known both through academic research and popular writings other areas within Irian Jaya have been much less well studied.

In the prehistoric past the whole island of New Guinea was settled by successive sets of in-migrations by peoples from South East Asia, beginning at least 40,000 years ago. These peoples populated coastal areas. The migrants must also have reached the interior highlands of the whole island as well as the outlying islands and eventually began the horticultural practices which were discovered in the Mount Hagen area by archeologists. About 3,500 years ago it has been suggested that a new wave of peoples, referred to as the Austronesians, entered the Pacific (Pawley 1998: 656; Kirch 2000: 91). The cultures of New Guinea developed through the intermingling and influence of the Austronesians with their much longer established non-Austronesian precursor populations.

Immense processes of change have taken place in New Guinea from prehistoric times on, quickening in their scope and intensity with the colonial intrusions of the Germans, Dutch, British, Australians, and Indonesians, and altering further in Papua New Guinea with political independence in 1975. Deteriorating situations of civil order, within Papua New Guinea, with combinations of criminal violence and inter-group fighting as well as struggles over the monetary benefits from cash-cropping and mining enterprises, have posed heavy problems for ordinary citizens of the country (see Strathern and Stewart 2003). Allegations of corruption and mismanagement in politics have become commonplace. Despite these problems we find throughout the diverse expanse of Papua New Guinea a number of continuing themes: a stress on life-cycle and political exchanges; an elaborate panoply of ritual practices connected with the overall aims of the reproduction of fertility and well-being; ingenious and successful ways of making a practical living in the environment; an interest in trading networks and external links between local groups; and a love of expressive adornment and display.

2. The Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands complex abuts at its north-western end on the lower tip of Bougainville Island, which is historically a part of Papua New Guinea. The six largest islands of the Solomons chain are Choiseul, Isabel, Malaita, New Georgia, Guadalcanal, and Makira. There are 347 inhabited islands out of a total of 922, with a population estimated in 1995 to be around 399,000. The indigenous peoples include both Austronesian and non-Austronesian speakers.

Spanish explorers came to the Solomons in the 16th and 17th centuries, as a part of the search for wealth. Pedro Fernandez de Quiros called the islands the Solomons, implying they were as rich as King Solomon's fabled treasure. Malaria and conflicts with the people led to the Spanish departing. In 1767-8, Carteret and de Bougainville sailed to Santa Cruz, Malaita, and Choiseul. In the 1830s the colonial trading phase began, sea traders purchasing shells, sea-cucumbers and sandalwood, often cheating the people and spreading disease as well as their trade goods (e.g. iron to replace stone tools). Labor recruiters between 1870 and 1910 took thousands of workers to the cane fields of Fiji and Queensland, Australia. Missionaries of the Catholic church began work on Guadalcanal and Malaita in the 19th century, and returning labor migrants brought back other forms of Christian faiths to establish new churches. Britain declared a protectorate in the Solomons in 1893 to limit German colonial interests in Bougainville. Large coconut plantations were established. The Japanese seized the Solomons in 1942, precipitating a fierce conflict with American military forces and the Allies, particularly in Guadalcanal.

The indigenous islanders were greatly impressed by the wealth and power of the Americans and after the defeat of the Japanese they began the Ma'asina Ruru (or Masing Rule) movement for change and reassertion of indigenous custom as a means of promoting political and cultural autonomy, in reaction against British colonial rule. The term Ma'asina means a set of brothers, derived from linguistic usage among the 'Are'are people, and the

aim of the movement was to unite a number of linguistic groups together in opposition to the colonial government (Keesing 1992: 103). The British arrested movement leaders, and factional struggles weakened it internally also; but the authorities were constrained to set up a system of local government after 1953, which led to political independence for the Solomons in 1978.

Timber is the Solomons' main export, and extensive logging threatens entirely to deplete the rainforests. Solomons waters are rich in fishing grounds for tuna, and fishing is the country's second largest industry.

3. Vanuatu

Vanuatu comprises 82 islands, divided into three groups. The twelve largest islands account for 93% of the land area and between them had a population of about 100,000 in 1989. The Spanish explorer Quiros named Espiritu Santo in 1606; the French explorer de Bougainville sailed between Espiritu Santo and Malekula in 1768; and Captain James Cook charted the entire group in 1774, calling it the New Hebrides. The name was changed to Vanuatu by the people after gaining their independence in 1980.

The colonial history of Vanuatu has been turbulent. Sandalwood traders from 1825 to 1869 provoked violence. Smallpox came to Vanuatu, via infected clothing from abroad, and the population dropped from about 500,000 to around 40,000 in 1920; currently it is up to approximately 174,000 (including foreigners). Up to the early 1900s as many as 50,000 people, males and females, were taken as indentured laborers to the sugar cane fields in Queensland, Australia (Moore 1985). French and British companies occupied indigenous lands and warships were sent to bombard coastal villages when the local people resisted this process. Joint British-French jurisdiction over the islands began in 1887. Independence came to Vanuatu in 1980.

Vanuatu cultures show much diversity as represented in their richly elaborated rituals and artistic traditions. Many of the rituals revolve around the importance of age-graded initiation, institutions of chiefship and

competition for power, and the raising of pigs for slaughter in sacrifice and extraction of their tusks to be used as prestigious decorations, accompanied by prestations of yams, taro, kava, and also dance forms and songs.

There are 105 separate languages in Vanuatu. These are all Austronesian languages.

4. New Caledonia

New Caledonia consists of a single 400 kilometers long island, La Grande Terre, with the Loyalty Islands chain to its east. In 1995 it had an estimated population of 185,000. French colonial possession over these territories was claimed in 1853, and the mineral-rich soils in this area gave rise from 1876 onward to a profitable nickel-mining industry. The Austronesians who entered the area around 2000 b.c.e. developed over time into thirty-seven distinct language groups and built stone fortifications in dry-land, karst limestone plateaus where competition for agricultural land was probably most intense (Kirch 2000: 150). On the main island taro irrigation terraces and yam mounding systems were developed. The traces of these formations possibly point to a build-up of population and emergence of chiefdoms in prehistoric times, followed by a massive demographic collapse after colonization owing to introduced disease and the disruption of indigenous agricultural patterns brought about by the colonial settlers (Kirch 2000: 155).

Captain James Cook gave the name of New Caledonia to La Grande Terre in 1774. British and American traders came searching for whales, sandalwood, and sea cucumbers throughout the 19th century. Later in the century, numbers of indigenous people were taken to foreign plantations as laborers. The presence and behavior of these traders effected the introduction of new diseases, guns, and fierce fighting. Catholic French and Protestant English missionaries battled one another for control over converts to the Christian religion. Missionaries thought they had purchased land from the people, while the people thought they had only given the incomers

permissive residence. From this further conflicts ensued. The French military were brought in to quieten down these disturbances and the emperor Napoleon III declared New Caledonia annexed to France in 1853. Convicts from France were shipped to New Caledonia to work on building churches and roads. After they were freed they were encouraged to settle locally. Free settlers also came from France, and took over land for cattle farms, destroying the taro terraces that had existed there. A revolt in 1878 was crushed, and the indigenous people were placed outside of French common law and forced into segregated reservations, with only 11% of the total land. Laborers were brought from Asia to work in the nickel mines which had begun in 1864.

Segregation ended in 1946 and political movements for independence began in the 1950s, and their struggles grew more intense after other Pacific countries gained independence from the 1970s onward. In 1984 the settlers of metropolitan French origins, the Caldoches, entered into factional fighting with the indigenous Kanaks. In 1998 New Caledonians agreed to a power-sharing arrangement with France and to delay a further independence referendum for fifteen to twenty years. The entrenched presence of the Caldoches has made a transition to independence much harder than elsewhere in the South-West Pacific.

5. Fiji

The name Fiji is used to refer to a conglomerate of islands scattered over 1,290,000 square kilometers of the South Pacific Ocean. One hundred and six of these islands are inhabited. Some of the islands are extremely isolated within the Ocean. The two largest islands are Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, which together account for 87% of Fiji's land. Three quarters of the population, which is divided between Pacific islander Fijians and Indo-Fijians, live on Viti Levu. Fiji was colonized by the British in the early nineteenth century. American ships also visited the islands for sandalwood trade. In 1854, Cakobau, an influential Fijian chief, converted to Wesleyan

(Methodist) Christianity and became king (Tui Viti) of Western Fiji with missionary assistance. Fiji became a British Crown Colony in 1874, and achieved independence in 1970. The British brought Indians to Fiji as indentured laborers from the late 1870s until 1916. The military coup of 1987 and the later disturbances of 2000 have brought to the fore ongoing issues of conflict between the indigenous islanders and the Indian islanders.

Around 334,000 islanders speak the Western and Eastern dialects of the Fijian language, which is classified as belonging to the Oceanic branch of the Austronesian language family. These Austronesian speakers had settled there by the late second millennium b.c.e., perhaps between 1200 and 1000 b.c.e. The principle of chiefship is highly developed in Fiji, linking it to the "Polynesian" societies lying east of it, as well as to societies with chiefly principles in other islands of the South-West Pacific.

South-West Pacific Research Trends and Suggestions

A number of topics of research that have been undertaken and that need to be further investigated can be discussed. To begin we stress that the practical examination of all of these topics involves taking into account the established foci of anthropological research such as kinship, ritual, gender, conflict, leadership, and historical change, because these foci are interwoven into contemporary life processes of politics, economics, and development generally. We have ourselves worked on these topics over the years within our specific research areas. Here we will go through 8 specific points on research trends and suggestions:²

1. Religious Change

One topic is that of religious and ritual change. Primarily here we mean

² We have worked on these topics over the years within our specific research areas. A list of our recent publications that address these topics can be found at our webpage (www.pitt.edu/~strather/sandspubli.htm). Many references to the wider literature on these topics can be found in the bibliographic lists within our published articles and books.

the historical processes of conversion to Christianity, with their accompanying alterations in ritual practices and cosmological ways of engaging with the world. In the South-West Pacific these processes can be interestingly compared with those among the Austronesian speaking minorities in Taiwan. This is a theme that has recently been explored in a workshop that we (Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern) co-organized with Dr. Pei-yi Guo and that took place in Taiwan at the Academia Sinica's Institute of Ethnology in May of 2005.³ This workshop brought together scholars who have worked in the Solomons and in Papua New Guinea with those who have worked among the indigenous groups here in Taiwan such as the Paiwan, Bunun, and Kavalan. Some of the more significant findings from these research projects include the following.

First, religious "conversion," whether collective or personal, is an important part of indigenous narratives about the process of religious change and cannot be neglected, but it also hides many complicated factors that reveal how changes are partial and piecemeal. These changes involve compromises with, and reformations of, indigenous cultural patterns, and also many awkward issues of cosmology, such as the place of the dead and the ancestors in the new cosmos.

Second, this historical process tends to fall into stages. In the early stage there is sometimes a fierce attack on many aspects of "traditional" culture by missionaries and/or evangelists. At this stage ritual tests of power or experiments in ritual combat take place. The aim here from the missionaries' or evangelists' viewpoints is to prove the "superior" power of God and/or Jesus. At this time previously used ritual objects and taboos may be discarded in the belief that they are less powerful than the introduced sacred figures. Or, if setbacks occur, doubt and ambiguity may remain.

³ This workshop was entitled "Power and Hierarchy: Religious Conversions, Ritual Constructions, and Cosmological Belief Systems in Asia and the Indo-Pacific" and was held May 30 to June 1, 2005. The forthcoming publication from the workshop is tentatively entitled "Cosmology, Religious Practice, and Power: Historical Transformation in Oceania and Taiwan," eds. Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern.

In a second phase, there is considerable cultural reconstruction, as other forces of change interact with Christianity to intensify processes of transformation: school education, migration, urbanization, health care, economic development, and the like come into play. In a third phase we find further religious revitalization movements, with new charismatic church practices beginning to engage the attention of people, and with conflict between generations, and the genders, and ideas of the nation, and of transnational linkages beginning to be influential in local contexts. Apocalyptic and millenarian themes have often emerged in this phase (see for example, Stewart and Strathern 1997, 2000b). We do not suggest that these three phases always all occur, only that they are a useful way of pointing out that conversion itself is a long-term historical process with local variations depending on the location and the local social and political context.

Interesting problems for future field and comparative research here include such matters as the language or languages in which Bible translation takes place and the significance of this for the people and their historical consciousness of themselves and others. Another issue is the tension between pragmatic reasons for religious change and more theologically related reasons. In a sense these two kinds of reasons also come together in what we have called the first phase of conversion, because the tests of power that are set up between religious practices are both pragmatic and theological in their content.

A third issue is the relationship between Christianity and other forms of institutional and social change generally. In Papua New Guinea, Christianity was introduced in colonial contexts; but it extends far beyond these contexts as time goes on. Finally here, and this is one of the issues that links the Pacific and Taiwan together, there is the issue in contemporary times of the relationship between Christianity and cultural practices at large. The case of the incorporation of indigenous elements into church liturgies is one instance of this issue. Also the intersection of Christian identities with senses

of personal and broader identities is at stake here. And last, researchers must recognize the great diversities of practices, approach, and belief between Christian denominations and churches themselves.

2. Mining Companies

Mining companies are tremendously important in the overall political economy of places such as Papua New Guinea, as is also the case for New Caledonia, and Irian Jaya (West Papua), both of which are still directly parts of wider colonial states, France in New Caledonia's case and Indonesia in the case of West Papua. The whole history of the state of Papua New Guinea is bound up with the fate of the huge mining complex on the island of Bougainville just north of the Solomon Islands. Recognizing the future needs of the nascent state in Papua New Guinea for future revenue flows, and no doubt having in mind also the economic interests of Australian-based mining companies, colonial officers instigated the first surveys and project proposals for the Bougainville mine prior to Papua New Guinea's political independence which took place on September 16th 1975.

Bougainville was flooded with immigrant workers and machines. The environment around the mine was severely impacted over time by pollution. The Bougainville people's senses of their physical and cultural differences from others with whom they were incorporated into the same nation and state were greatly accentuated by these massive impacts of change. In 1988 one group among them, the Nasioi, on whose land the mine was developed, and who had complained about the pollution of their environment, were prominent in initiating the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, fighting against the central government. Much earlier, at the time of Independence itself in 1975, Bougainville's politicians had forced a crisis with the central government by demanding more autonomy for their island, and so influencing the central government to institute a level of provincial government for all of its 20 provinces. The same politicians struggled much later to achieve a settlement of the civil war that had broken out over the

mining issue, and a peace agreement was eventually signed on August 30th in 2001.

The Bougainville mine did at first generate much income for the new state, and when those revenues failed in the 1980s development work elsewhere, for example in the Highlands provinces, was set back. This influenced the government to look for new mining projects in a number of locales, including in the Highlands region. Huge mining complexes for copper and gold were set up, first at Mount Fubilan, with the Ok Tedi mine there in 1984, and then in 1991 at Porgera in the Enga Province, where the Porgera Joint Venture company runs a large gold mine on the site at which much earlier small-scale expatriate gold prospecting had been carried out. These two mines have helped to replace government revenue lost with the closure of the Bougainville mine. The Southern Highlands Province has seen the development of large gas and oil projects in the 1990s which have brought large amounts of revenue and even larger numbers of social problems and conflicts over compensation for the use of land and the distribution of royalties between immediate claimants of the land, the provincial government, and the national government.

The correlates and consequences of these large-scale industrial developments have in many ways overshadowed the phenomena of the growth of cash-cropping and agricultural development that had predominated in these Highlands provinces from the 1960s through to the 1980s. Mining projects turned previous patterns of development upside down: peripheral areas with little agricultural potential became the centers from which vast amounts of new wealth were generated. And interstitial areas, with less cash-cropping than places such as Mount Hagen and Goroka in the Western and Eastern Highlands, where coffee and tea plantations were established already in the 1950s, now became affected much more by the outwash of influences and aspirations from the mining centers.

This large change in development patterns has also generated a new wave of research centered on the effects of mining, carried out by

economists, political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists. Mining has given a boost also to applied work in anthropology, as both government and companies employ anthropologists as consultants on mining-related issues. Prominent in this research has been the question of compensation to local communities: who should receive it, how much, how it should be divided, how it can be used for long-term benefits, and ultimately who controls it. The great disparities of wealth created on many levels by mining have also been accompanied by an increase in levels of violence of many kinds, a topic we have spent much time studying on a comparative basis. We discuss this further under the heading of governance (section 6, below).

Anthropologists have made a considerable contribution to this wave of study, particularly by stressing the complex cultural concomitants of the development process. Working among a section of the Duna speaking people of the Southern Highlands whose lives have been affected both by the Ok Tedi and the Porgera mines, we found that the people had for many years developed expectations and fears regarding mining, and when a company came seeking oil in a corner of territory on their own borders, an elaborate myth-narrative was developed while we were in the field in 1999 which effectively functioned as a way of conceptualizing and explaining the failure of the oil-prospecting in terms of their own mythology. The narrative at one and the same time expressed their anxieties about the prospecting because it threatened to take away the ancestral potency of their land, and their claims to compensation should this happen (see Stewart and Strathern 2002b; Strathern and Stewart 2004). Our work here fits in with a cycle of findings by other researchers who have worked in areas closer to the Porgera mine itself.

There is clearly room for much more research of this kind in mining-affected areas, both coastal and highland, and both by consultants and non-consultant academic researchers. Similar research can also be conducted on large-scale logging and fishing operations that affect people's livelihoods. We mention this again under section 5, on ecology and

sustainable development, below.

3. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Consultancy Work

We have a special interest in this topic, not only because of its connection with mining and development in general, but also because we have co-edited a collection of papers by anthropologists on their experiences as consultants or as observers of the consultancy process or their interactions with NGOs in Papua New Guinea (Stewart and Strathern 2005a). NGOs seem also to have become highly significant and high-profile actors in a variety of settings world-wide within the last decade or so. They try to step in where government cannot do everything. In some ways they take the places of Christian missionaries, and in some instances they themselves may have religious connections. They supply relief in emergencies. They may also supply long-term advice on development projects that have a community or environmental orientation.

The contributors to our volume discussed these issues of consultancy work and NGOs from their own perspectives. We mention here a few of these. Paige West studied how an NGO among the Gimi people in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea was redefining what it meant to be a Gimi person in terms of a supposed model of “traditional culture” and how this affected the NGO’s attitudes to the people (West 2005). Martha Macintyre reported on how gender issues entered into people’s attitudes to mining developments and roles in the development process (Macintyre 2005). Marta Rohatynskyj discussed how she acted as a consultant for the East New Britain provincial government in their dealings with the Baining people: “ethnic relations” became the focus of her work (Rohatynskyj 2005). And Lorenzo Brutti discussed how people in the Oksapmin (Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea) area responded to enquiries about their land ownership and social structure in a company investigation aimed at determining who should receive compensation for riverine use by the

Porgera Joint Venture Company, in which the company uses the Strickland River to discharge some of its mine wastes (Brutti 2005). The Duna people whom we study were also involved in this matter, since the Strickland River runs at their border, dividing them from the Oksapmin (Stewart and Strathern 2002b).

With the expansion both of companies and of NGOs throughout Papua New Guinea the scope for more studies about anthropology and consultancy has increased. The same is the case for the Solomons, where the focus might be on logging and fishing impacts.

4. Health Care and the Problem of AIDS and other Epidemic Diseases

Medical anthropology studies in Papua New Guinea have concentrated on the ideas about health of particular populations. Many of them pre-date the emergence of an awareness about HIV and AIDS. They nevertheless contain valuable clues about how people are likely to think about AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) which have become a severe problem, in part as a result of rural-urban migration and urban prostitution. The Institute of Medical Research in Goroka, which earlier laid a major focus on malaria, another disease that still poses a serious threat, has in recent years appointed researchers to coordinate work on sexual practices and the distribution of HIV/AIDS, as a follow-up of an earlier country-wide survey on the practices of younger people.

As commonly happens around the world, there was a period of time in which the government was reluctant to acknowledge the existence of a problem regarding AIDS. This period also allowed the problem to grow unseen. Other STDs were long recognized, and for many of them cures or treatments were available through the use of various medicines. The coastal ports of Lae in the north of Papua New Guinea and Port Moresby in the south were probably early sources of infection. Migrant workers carried disease further into rural areas remote from the coast. One term in the lingua

franca of Papua New Guinea known as Tok Pisin reveals a part of the story: the term for female prostitute is *pasim dia meri*, "passenger woman," i.e., a woman who hitches rides on trucks traveling up and down the Highlands Highway along which goods pass from the coastal city of Lae into the interior of the country and back. In Port Moresby, at least, male homosexual prostitution as a practice was reportedly introduced via expatriates into communities where it was said to have been previously unknown.

In our book on "Curing and Healing: Medical Anthropology in Global Perspective" (Strathern and Stewart 1999c) we have reported a story that became current in the Mount Hagen area on how AIDS entered their community. This story or rumor said that a prominent local rugby player went south to Australia for a tournament and while there and staying in a hotel he had sex with a woman. In the morning she was gone, but had left him a note saying "Welcome to my world of AIDS." This is a classic piece of urban legend, in which ultimate blame is placed upon an outsider and a female, but also on an elite male individual in the indigenous society. Folklore of this kind has probably developed at a fast rate in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in recent years.

AIDS has thus produced its own mythology and its own circulations of rumors and narratives. Another narrative is that rich local men contract AIDS overseas, and subsequently pay for sex with young girls in their home areas, who then unwittingly spread the disease. Blame is here traced to males and the emergence of a class system based on wealth as well as an implicit breakdown in sexual controls in the society. Following the somewhat belated but vigorous efforts to combat the spread of AIDS by the government around the year 2000, the Christian churches have also begun to intensify their efforts to discourage sexual promiscuity on the basis of Christian morality and church involvement in marriage and social activity.

From an anthropological viewpoint, an important matter to take into account in studies of health and illness in general is the way the people see the body as working and the relationship of elements within the whole

complex that is the person in society. We have analyzed New Guinea peoples' ideas of the body on kinds of "humoral systems," in which the flows and capacities of humors such as "blood," and "grease," and "water" in the body are combined with ideas about "skin," "flesh," and "bone" to build up what we may call ethno-physiologies (Stewart and Strathern 2001). Such studies are important also in the context of AIDS. While it is often suggested that a problem in treating AIDS cases is the reluctance about discussing sexual activity coupled with fear of those found to have AIDS, it is also true that humoral views of the body should lend themselves easily to a comprehension of the danger of the inappropriate flow of substances between persons. It is urbanization more than anything in the indigenous cultures as such that has brought the problem of AIDS to rural as well as urban areas within the country.

We suggest the need for more research in the remoter rural areas themselves, since these are at risk of being considered less relevant to the problem as a whole. On the contrary, we suggest they are highly vulnerable. Of course, there are long-established variations in sexual practices throughout Papua New Guinea. These have for long also been subject to both mission influence and to government-sponsored education and change. The problem of HIV/AIDS is a major one that needs much more research done to better deal with the phenomenon.

5. Ecology and Sustainable Development

Within New Guinea most of the earlier work on ecology has concentrated on agriculture, agro-forestry, and hunting activities, with an emphasis on population densities and the viability of land occupation and hunting. In coastal areas with access to the sea, protein from fish has long been important. These areas are threatened by large-scale commercial fishing in some instances. In the Highlands region of New Guinea, the staple crop of sweet potato allowed the growth of large populations of humans and associated pig herds, decreasing the reliance on hunting and facilitating the

spread of large language groups. These same populations then became the hosts to large-scale introduced plantations of coffee and tea, at first expatriate-owned and worked by immigrant laborers from peripheral areas. Later, cash-cropping on a smallholder basis was also encouraged by government action. Studies concentrated on the viability or otherwise of coffee-growing, its effects on horticultural patterns generally, the division of work and profit from it between women and men, and whether there were dangers of eroding the subsistence base of communities. Long-term conclusions from these studies were not reached, and there is a need for them to be renewed, because coffee is still an important source of income.

However, as we have noted earlier, the mining industry and its problems have overshadowed many other aspects of development. Mines can only last for a certain period of time. Because of immense problems of environmental pollution, the Ok Tedi mine was scheduled to close early in the twenty first century. The Porgera mine was predicted to come to a close of operations by about 2010, but current estimates now give it a longer life. Local people, such as those in the Duna area where we work, have become partly dependent on mining companies for social services, in the absence of effective governmental outreach in their zones. The Porgera Joint Venture company, for example, established a new Health Center among them, beginning the process of building it in 1999. Studies of how such services are maintained or otherwise over time and how communities cope both with the existence of a mine and its aftermath are important arenas for research. We also suggest that here, as in other regards, indigenous knowledge of the environment is important to take into account and record. The Duna people that we know, for example, have an intimate knowledge of the forest and its products, as well as of the crops they grow and how they manage them. Sustainable development planning should incorporate indigenous knowledge as much as possible (Stewart and Strathern 2004a). This point is further related to cultural heritage issues, which we discuss in section 8 below. Deforestation and the potential depletion of fishing stocks are

important issues in both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

6. Governance

Governance is a major issue throughout the South-West Pacific today. Each country has its own set of problems. The Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea share the problem of the potential instability of government owing to frequent fluctuations in the strength of political parties and their leaders. In some ways this is an inevitable outcome of the democratic process in multi-ethnic situations, where no one large group holds dominance. In other ways it is a particular result of the kind of democratic politics that was established at the time of Independence, at least in Papua New Guinea. There, political independence came to many areas long before the people wanted it or knew what it was. Parties accordingly could not, and still cannot, be based on firm ideologies. Instead, they tend to resemble unstable factions centered on leading figures and held together by material reciprocities and temporary power sharing, from which, in turn, accusations of political corruption emerge. The wash of money from large-scale mining exacerbates rather than alleviates this problem.

Papua New Guinea has repeatedly experienced the strains arising out of this situation. It has also suffered continual challenges in the sphere of law and order since Independence was established. Governmental effectiveness and, further, legitimacy, come into question. Local people may demand compensation for perceived damages or grievances both from their own government and from companies. Trucks carrying supplies may be pillaged, and travelers may be held hostage (Stewart and Strathern 1999). Rural populations sometimes feel that since the ending of colonial control they have been administratively neglected. There are disagreements and arguments between provincial and national-level authorities. Economic aid continues to come from Australia, along with grants from the World Bank, ostensibly tied to fiscal reform and structural changes in the overall economy. The Australian government recently offered to reintroduce

Australian police personnel in order to bolster the effectiveness of the national police force, and to help rebuild needed police housing facilities. The ramifications of these and other issues affect the local communities everywhere. Constant monitoring of these processes by research workers would be desirable. Serious ethnic conflicts in the Solomon Islands have also engaged the attention of both the Australian and the New Zealand governments. Sensitivities regarding the sovereignty of these small and relatively new and vulnerable states in the Pacific limit the extent of acceptable involvement by their previous colonial rulers or their proxies.

At the same time, all kinds of enterprises, including those of the tourist industry, require a basic modicum of safety in order to flourish. Strong, while still democratic and open, government is the ideal. In recent elections in Papua New Guinea election-related violence has become a major problem, especially in the Southern Highlands Province where so much money has been generated from mining projects, and some of this money in turn has supposedly been exchanged for guns used by local power-seekers and their youthful militias. In these circumstances the peaceful democratic process is itself threatened. We have followed many of these themes in our fieldwork over the years, but the research requires continual updating.

7. Security and Terror

Some of our comparative work has been on world-wide issues of violence, terror and terrorism (Stewart and Strathern 2002c; Strathern and Stewart 2005a, 2005b; Strathern, Stewart and Whitehead 2005). Although the Pacific is not currently an epicenter of such problems, there are a number of wider questions surrounding governance that belong here. The methods of control used by the Indonesian military in relation to the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM, Organization for Papuan Freedom) and West Papua generally are frequently commented on unfavorably by human rights watch organizations. These methods certainly attain to levels of producing terror and therefore compliance to government rule, at least in the reports that

emerge. Since Papua New Guinea shares a border with Indonesia, bisecting the island of New Guinea, fears of Indonesian incursions and embarrassments over West Papuan refugees have been problems for successive Papua New Guinea governments. Studies of border relations and attitudes to the border with Indonesia have been made from time to time. Further studies, especially of the links between Vanimo on the Papua New Guinea coast and Djayapura in West Papua, connected by a road, would be interesting, as well as of other spots along the border where movements of various illicit goods takes place.

Violence, and ideas about violence, flourish in the world of the imagination, and the imagination constantly reconstructs pictures of the world in terms of hopes, fears, and desires. In local communities we know, historically changing and emergent ideas about witchcraft, and accusations against witches or sorcerers, reflect such projections of the imagination and their real (and sometimes unanticipated) results (Stewart and Strathern 2004b). Research on the cultural production and circulation of such images about violence can help us to understand historical changes in general in people's perceptions about their world and the boundaries of safety and danger within it. Our book on "Terror and the Imagination," co-edited with Neil Whitehead (2005), explores these issues in greater depth.

8. Cultural Heritage

It is an interesting point that when a country wants to showcase its identity and diversity, it tends to turn toward culture and cultural performance rather than to its gross national product or its welfare in terms of housing or health care or the state of its roads. "Cultural heritage" is also one of the few issues that tend to bring together government and people in "harmony," because it provides a shared context of values ostensibly outside of arenas of conflict. Moreover, in very practical terms, representations of "culture" are often what tourists come looking for, and "culture" here tends to mean "cultural performances," costumes, elaborate decorations, markers

of specific identities now tied to an overall sense of national identity and difference. We have explored this theme in a recently published book that we co-edited entitled "Expressive Genres and Historical Change: Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Taiwan" (Stewart and Strathern 2005b). We have also stressed in this book the continuing local significance of oral genres of song and poetry in general.

These expressions of identity are certainly shown in the Pacific generally and in particular in the South-West Pacific where a very large number of locally different languages and cultures developed, providing a tremendously rich context of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage, as a theme, also arises out of contexts of sharp change, following which people may try to reach back to "what they had before," or governments may explicitly promote such a nostalgia, tying it in with a new sense of national-level identity. Periodic regional shows, displays on national occasions such as Independence day, and tours by performance groups overseas, all provide ways in which such senses of identity can be projected and turned into both political and economic profit.

It is unsurprising, then, that movements for cultural revival often receive government support and gain popularity at all levels. Such movements are very worthy of study, because they represent complex attempts to mediate cultural contradictions arising from the past and to revalorize in new ways old practices once condemned or abandoned. Christian churches have to come to terms with such movements. So do governments, which may welcome cultural expressions as such but may feel differently if a particular group threatens secession on the basis of its cultural difference from others within the nation. Cultural heritage can thus both stand for the nation in one set of images, and threaten it in another set through its assertions of difference and opposition to socio-cultural homogeneity.

Here, we suggest, is a really significant focus for comparative research among the different nations of the South-West Pacific, taking into account

the phenomena of literature and art, the roles of museums, of professional groups, and the public at large in building a synthetic picture of how cultural heritage issues enter into national identities. Here, also, and in a very clear way, we see parallels between the situation of the South-West Pacific Austronesian speakers (and the Papuan-speakers of the interiors of these islands) and the Austronesian groups within Taiwan, among whom we have also undertaken some preliminary work on issues of cultural revival and historical change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have picked out eight areas of research and suggested ways in which these could be further pursued. These themes, of course, represent only a selection among a wider set of alternatives; but we chose them because of their contemporary relevance to Pacific populations themselves as well as for their interest for anthropologists and social scientists generally. We return here finally to an overall point that we have stressed earlier. All of these topics are crucially intertwined in the actual lives of people with issues of identity, land, group membership, ritual practices, kinship, and exchange. Given the general salience of exchange as a significant feature of societies in the South-West Pacific, as well as an established focus in the literature, this topic provides a bridge between the historical and contemporary worlds of practice in this part of the world, and could aptly be pursued as an appropriate emphasis for further research and study in a number of venues, including potentially within the framework of the Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies at the Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

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