The Concept of Development in Ulawa in Solomon Islands and its Implications for National Development Policy and Planning

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies

at the University of Waikato

by

FREDERICK ISOM ROHORUA

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University of Waikato

2007

Abstract

'Social development' and 'economic development' are complex concepts, concepts that may be interpreted very differently in different contexts and at different times. Not only may the processes involved be different in different contexts, so too may be the criteria by which success is judged. It is argued here that successive Solomon Islands governments have striven for social and economic development without taking full account of the real nature of Solomon Islands society. What is needed is national development policy, planning and implementation that arise out of, and take fully into account, the historical, geographic and cultural context of Solomon Islands.

On the whole, the socio-economic structure of Solomon Islands society is currently underpinned by a tri-partite hierarchy in which, for the majority of Solomon Islanders, *kastom* (traditional beliefs and practices) and church (the beliefs and practices endorsed by the church) take precedence over the state as legitimate forms of authority. This inevitably poses problems for state-led development. If socio-economic development activities are to be successful in achieving a better quality of life for all Solomon Islanders, including those who live in rural areas, they must take full account of the role of *kastom* and church in the lives of the people. This must include an understanding of the differing concepts of development of people in different areas of the country such as those of Ulawa islanders that are discussed here.

The thesis begins with an introduction to the research (*Chapter 1*) in which the theoretical framework is located broadly within the postmodern paradigm. In

Chapter 2 the essentially qualitative and interpretive nature of the methodology is outlined and explained. *Chapter 3* provides a critical review of international development literature in which it is argued that official definitions and descriptions of development are based on production and deficit models. The need to accommodate an indigenous and organic concept of development, one that takes account of the diversity of human experience, is stressed. *Chapter 4* provides an outline of Solomon Islands society. Here, the historical narrative is complemented by three metaphors - 'island', *wantok* and betelnut - which serve to reinforce and explain the nature of Solomon Islands society and the ways in which that society has been shaped by historical processes. *Chapter 5* is devoted to a discussion of modern development activity in Solomon Islands, the main focus being on the period immediately preceding and following independence. *Chapter 6* explores, with particular reference to Ulawa Island, indigenous concepts of development and the impact of national development activities on rural-dwelling islanders. It also engages the issue of state reform, proposing a model based on a two tier system, with central government in its current form dealing directly with the people at constituency rather than provincial level. Finally, *Chapter 7* summarizes the main conclusions reached. It is noted that the failure of both pre- and post-independence governments to take full account of the nature of Solomon Islands society has been a major factor in the lack of effective development in the islands.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late sister, Betsy Awao Eletekutoro, and, in honour of their gift of life to me, to my late parents, dad Harry Awao Poenjili and mum Nesta Mamahe. *Munia mamaʻa na teite.*

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge my chief supervisor Dr Eci Nabalarua, Chairperson of the Development Studies Department in the School of Māori and Pacific Development (University of Waikato) until the end of 2005 and currently Deputy-Vice Chancellor (Academic) at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. As a fellow Pacific Islander, she knew what I was going through and played her part as best she could. I would like to thank you, Professor Nabalarua, for your forbearance in my personal struggle: *vinaka va ka levu Adi, vinaka sara* for all your help and support. I would also like to thank my other supervisors, Associate Professor Winifred Crombie and Dr Michael Goldsmith: *Tagio tumas nao iu tufala everiwan.* Dr Goldsmith, thank you so much for providing invaluable references and for helping me to appreciate the importance of careful attention to language in academic discourse. Professor Crombie, your assistance and guidance have been incalculable. I can only say 'thank you' in humble gratitude. To all of those at the University of Waikato and, in particular, to those in the School of Māori and Pacific Development and its Development Studies Department who have provided me with study opportunities: *Tēnā koutou.*

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Chapter 1

Establishing place and space

1.1   Introduction

The broad theoretical framework in which this thesis is located is drawn from that of a post-modern development discourse with a particular focus on the post-independence context of Solomon Islands. The overall aim is to describe and analyse the development process in Solomon Islands over the quarter century that begins with the gaining of political independence in 1978.

Underlying the approach adopted here is the observation that despite more than two and a half decades of development effort and activity, Solomon Islands remains categorised in mainstream development discourse and official or government literature as either an under-developed or developing country. Even so, the lives of Solomon Islanders *have* changed since political independence – and continue to do so. The question is whether any of these changes have led to an improvement in the lives and socio-economic circumstances of the people. Can a detailed description and analysis of development aims and processes in the quarter of a century since independence throw some light on the issue of state reform which is the other pertinent issue in Solomon Islands since the Australian-led intervention in July 2003? What implications do such a description and analysis have for the future of Solomon Islands and, in particular, for the future of development initiatives in Solomon Islands, especially from the point of view of

the national or central government and in respect of national development policy and planning? These are the critical questions that will be addressed here.

1.2 Establishing local spaces in global places

The study of development in the global context has traditionally centred on issues of economic growth. More recently, however, it has widened its sphere of concern to include issues of social and gender inequality, poverty alleviation, environmental and ecological issues, issues relating to security, and issues relating to the relevance and utility of indigenous knowledge. The intentions have been noble ones. Nevertheless, these intentions have not necessarily been translated into positive outcomes for the most disadvantaged. For this reason, critical engagement with global development thinking and practices has seen the emergence of a post-modern critique of mainstream development discourse (for example, Arturo Escobar (1995)). Part of this critical agenda is what has also been termed a "cultural turn" in development studies (Schech & Haggis, 2000; 2002), something that has been inspired by the realisation that development thought and practices are not value-neutral. Rather, they are embedded within a range of fundamental cultural values and presuppositions which emerge out of a Western or Anglo-American world view, a world-view that is embedded in the culture of such international and highly influential institutions as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations (UN), and multinational corporations. For this reason, it has been argued that the apparent failure of past efforts to fully grasp, indeed fulfil adequately, the global development agenda is, in part at least, due to the presumed universalism inherent within the dominant discourses and institutions of development. The hegemonic paradigm of mainstream development discourse

has given insufficient consideration to the contextualised experiences and peculiar understandings of development in different parts of the world. Even so, this paradigm continues to shape mainstream global development agendas and practices although, as indicated above, serious questions are being asked about it (see, for example, Rist (1997)).

1.3   Scope and focus of the study

For the purposes of this study, development is broadly conceived of as involving social and cultural as well as economic factors. Solomon Islands society is socially and culturally diverse and its people occupy a number of separate islands in a geographical sense. These islands are, however, grouped (if not necessarily unified) into a single political entity, and this grouping is itself conceptualised metaphorically as an 'island', as, that is, an entity on its own, isolated, distinct and different, an entity to which mainstream development discourse cannot be applied meaningfully. The Solomons as 'island' is an entity that has its own voice, a voice that is, however, too readily drowned out by the louder and more authoritative voices of the `continental lands' that represent mainstream development thinking and practices. These `continental' voices that define, indeed, frame mainstream development discourse in turn seek to define, to classify, and, ultimately, to stigmatise the nature and process of development in `island' societies.[1] My aim is to uncover 'island' voices, to let Solomon Islanders speak their own experiences and understanding of development, express their own

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[1] Britain is here included as one of these 'continental' voices although its physical status as an island, and the many ways in which it differs from continental Europe, is something to which reference is so often made. Since Britain was the colonial power that occupied Solomon Islands, there is, of course, also a further irony involved in the fact that the British use an island metaphor powerfully – but in a very different way from the way in which it is used here.

views in their own way with reference to their own lives and aspirations. It is, I believe, only when these voices have been heard that we can begin to understand what development means for Solomon Islanders and for Solomon Islands. Only then will it be possible to formulate a development agenda that makes sense in 'island' terms.

It has been observed that Solomon Islands will be treated here as a political entity – an 'island' whose development discourse will necessarily be different and distinct from that of the 'continental'. However, notwithstanding its status as a political entity, Solomon Islands is made up, both literally and metaphorically, of many different islands. Within Solomon Islands, there are many different social and cultural entities, each of which may have a different voice. Thus, although the overall focus of the thesis is Solomon Islands, there is also a more specific focus – a single island, the Island of Ulawa. It is primarily the voices of the people of Ulawa that will inform this study.

The thesis begins with a description and analysis of the objectives and processes of development activity in Solomon Islands in the years between the gaining of political independence (July 1978) and the emergence of a national civil crisis relating to traumatic ethnic conflict (1998), a national crisis that lasted from December 1998 to July 2003. Today, a regional peacekeeping mission (RAMSI) led by Australia and New Zealand assisted by other Pacific Islands countries (including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Kiribati and Nauru) helps maintain law and order in Solomon Islands and, thus, contributes to its economic recovery.

Although the focus of this study is post-independence development activity, the origins of this development activity lie in the activities of the British before independence. For this reason, the effect of British colonial rule on post-independence national development policy and planning will also be discussed.

The thesis begins with an outline of the methodology of the thesis in (*Chapter 2*). In *Chapter 3*, coverage of dimensions of development in the international literature is undertaken. *Chapter 4* provides a description of contemporary Solomon Islands society. This is followed by a description and analysis of the process of development at both national (*Chapter 5*) and rural (*Chapter 6*) levels. The description of development processes at the national level focuses on the development plans and policies introduced by the national government. The discussion of rural development focuses on the downward filtering of national development plans and policies in geographically scattered and culturally and linguistically diverse rural areas. In order to provide a real sense of the impact (or otherwise) of national development policy and planning on rural areas, one such area - Ulawa Island – is examined in detail. Ulawa Island was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is an island society whose people (of whom I am one) share a common language and culture. Secondly, it is some travelling distance away either by boat or by plane from both Honiara, Solomon Islands capital, and Kira Kira, the nearest urban centre which is located on the mainland of Makira or San Cristobal. In common with many other rural areas of Solomon Islands, Ulawa Island has a communal land ownership tenure system and a predominantly semi-subsistence lifestyle. There are, however, many differences

between rural Solomon Islanders living in different parts of the country although on the whole, there are aspects of Ulawa Island that are similar to many of the rural areas of the Solomons generally.

1.4 Background to the study

In order to provide readers with an initial understanding of the context in which this study is located, an attempt is made here to provide some insights into attitudes towards development activities in Solomon Islands.

Everyone in Solomon Islands – from politicians to subsistence farmers – is interested in development. It is a subject that gives rise to heated debates in all sorts of formal and informal contexts. Although there is, inevitably, a wide spectrum of opinion, one commonly held view is that one reason why significant development efforts have not been matched by significant improvements in living conditions is that the country was ill prepared by the British for the responsibilities that came with independence. Sir Baddley Devesi[2] (1992) is one strong advocate of that view. He stated quite clearly a few years ago that from the point of view of human resources and localisation "Britain did not adequately prepare the Solomons for independence" (p. 5). In fact, he maintained that it was only in 1971 (only seven years before independence) that Britain became serious about training local officers for senior positions in the public service "by giving them crash courses in senior Public Administration at the University of the South Pacific and other institutions, to prepare them for independence" (p. 5). As he wryly commented: "Four years later some of those officers became Permanent

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[2] At independence, Sir Baddley Devesi was the first Governor-General of Solomon Islands.

Secretaries and two years later came independence. These officers immediately assumed responsibilities which were a few months earlier performed by older and experienced expatriate officers, many of whom had up to forty years of administration experience here and elsewhere" (p. 5).[3]

These sentiments were later reiterated in an article by Mary-Louise O'Callaghan which appeared in the New Zealand Herald (7 July, 2003):

It should have been the climax of a history making day.

As British officials and minor royals sweated in their suits, 25 years ago today, the crowd at Honiara's main stadium swelled forward to see their new nation's flag hoisted aloft for the first time.

Seconds earlier the Union Jack had shot down the pole, keeping pace with the indecent haste of the British departure from one of their last colonial outposts in the South Pacific.

Then, with an awkward pause so laden with portent it was to resonate for a quarter of a century, the bright green, blue and yellow flag of the world's newest nation refused to open.

'It's true, it didn't unfurl smoothly', recalls Sir Baddeley Devesi, who as the 36-year-old Governor-General-designate was watching the progress of the flag.

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[3] In his autobiography, Lloyd Maepeza Gina (2003), who was the first Speaker of Solomon Islands Parliament, shares some of his personal experiences as one of those first few local Solomon Islanders to pass through the Solomon's British civil service and to eventually assume a prominent leadership position at independence.

'And if you listen to my speech at Independence Day you will hear the uncertainty I harboured too; I was not sure what was going to be'.

'My doubts were based on a lack of proper preparation by the British Administration for economic development after independence', says Sir Baddeley.

Now retired after a distinguished career both as the Governor-General for two terms and then as a minister of the Crown he'd represented, Sir Baddeley say this lack of preparation is at the heart of his nation's present woes.

Today Solomon Islands might celebrate 25 years of independence but tomorrow the country's parliamentarians will meet to debate and most likely endorse a request for outside intervention.

Much attention has been placed on the military component of the planned operation, but perhaps the more ambitious element of Australian Prime Minister Howard's Solomons plan is the civilian one designed to essentially do what the British never did.

This will involve inserting expatriates directly into the Solomon's moribund administration to try first to re-establish some of its functions and financial integrity, but also in the long term to help the islands to develop their own capacities to operate a modest but modern state.

The Australian Institute of Strategic Studies estimated this as at least a 10-year process.

Armed with a British system of justice, a Westminster Parliament, four volcanoes and about 70 languages and scattered over a 1600km-long archipelago, the Solomons on July 7, 1978 were thrust out into the real world.

But vast social, economic and political changes were demanded of this island country in order to craft itself into a viable nation after just 85 years of British colonialism.

But little in the way of guidance, education, resources or capital was provided to its 300,000 or so people.

Augustine Manakako was one of just five graduates the British had managed to educate at the time of independence.

At 34, the young administrator from the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal was already a permanent secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and saw firsthand the capacity of his young nation.

'Solomon Islands was not prepared for independence', he says bluntly now.

A similar sentiment was expressed by the Governor of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands (Rick Houenipwela) in an article in *Islands Business* (August, 2004):

[Since] independence there has been expressed dissatisfaction over the distribution of government services and economic benefits and matters of internal migration. It is probably true that we were unprepared for independence. . . .

[With] the onslaught of commercial and personal interests, government machinery was ill prepared to handle these pressures. This gave the opening for corruption, which has since taken hold of the country.

Houenipwela's opinions are taken seriously both in Solomon Islands and beyond. He was, after all, chosen as 'Person of the Year' (2004) by the *Islands Business*

magazine. His view is that the lack of preparation for independence played a critical role in the inability of government machinery to handle the pressures of commercial and personal interests that inevitably followed independence when national/central government was the only legitimate institution (by virtue of legislative authority) tasked with the responsibility of overseeing, through national development policy and planning, the process of development in Solomon Islands. The inability of the government machinery to properly and effectively fulfil its legislative functions had, at the time when Houenipwela wrote, resulted in the emergence of "a small group of wealthy and politically powerful elite and a growing majority of poor, and still getting poorer, population" (Houenipwela, August, 2004). There can be no doubt that corruption played a significant role in the social and economic disparity among the people of Solomon Islands. However, the potential for corruption is present in all societies. Only strong government, government that has institutionalised means of controlling, containing and countering that potential, is likely to succeed in protecting its citizens and encouraging productive development. Sir Baddley (1992, pp. 1-2) offers us some important insights regarding Britain's hasty retreat from Solomon Islands:

> Britain was quietly preparing the Solomons for eventual constitutional independence from the 1960s to the early 1970s. It was important for Britain to do this because Solomon Islands derived little or no economic benefits as a country.

Indeed, Sir Baddley (1992, p. 2) pointed out that the "quicker they gave independence to Solomon Islands, the better it would be for Britain". From a Solomon Islands point of view, however, as far as social and economic

development was concerned, the "only new and worthwhile project that Britain encouraged during this period was the establishment of the Palm Oil Project by the Commonwealth Development Corporation. [In fact] there were no other really large investments other than the British associated investments which were merely giving assistance to what was already well established, such as Levers Brothers"[4] (Devesi, 1992, p. 2). The lack of any genuine sense of responsibility by the British in preparing for political independence is evident.

In hindsight, the state of affairs that existed in Solomon Islands at the time of independence can be seen as a recipe for disaster. It is, in this context, not surprising that Solomon Islands was plunged into a state of ethnic civil conflict in December 1998 and that there was further conflict following the 2006 general election. It is in this context, therefore, that development activities in Solomon Islands in the quarter of a century following independence must be viewed. Solomon Islands is a political entity. It is, however, linguistically, culturally and socially diverse. Unless the new post-independence government could succeed in uniting the people, in creating a sense of nationhood, problems were, as Houenipwela (*Islands Business*, August 2004, p. 34) observes, almost inevitable:

> One important reason for the country's prevailing fragmentation is the inability of successive governments to cement Solomon Islands as one people and mould the country as a nation.

> Governments did not work in a logical manner to provide rural areas, where most of the population lives, with schools, hospitals, clinics, a functioning transport system and telecommunications.

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[4] Levers Brothers was more involved in the coconut plantation and cattle industries.

Although Houenipwela acknowledges that there may have been some good national leaders, he notes that the majority appear to have been corrupt, opportunistic or simply inept. Sound management, good governance and strategic leadership – important prerequisites of effective national planning – were absent. John Garo, Leader of the Opposition, expressed a similar sentiment in parliament (in the context of RAMSI, the Australian-led intervention in Solomon Islands), saying: "sad as it may be, we have to accept that this has resulted from the fact that over the past 25 years successive leaderships of this country have failed at all levels to lead and serve our people" (as cited in Jon Fraenkel, 2004, p. 166).

This is what Bennett (1987, p. xix) had to say about Solomon Islands leaders:

> In their interaction with one another, leadership has always been important to Solomon Islanders. The relationship of leaders to supporters has changed little over the years (barring recent national politics), though the means to leadership were transmuted as warfare and certain other practices became outlawed. Many old-style leaders lost authority, and were soon replaced by younger men who exploited new, government-sanctioned ways to power.

Societal dysfunction is an important theme in the discourses of the social sciences and of development, particularly those that focus on deficit modelling (Mertens, 2003, p. 144). Indeed, classical development theories – both modernization and dependency theories – are predicated on a deficit model whereby "the rest try to imitate and catch up with the West" (Desai & Potter, 2002, p. 2). However, the process of development in Solomon Islands is discussed here not in terms of deficit, but in terms of difference (Mertens, 2003). My intention is not to suggest

that indigenous knowledge and non-mainstream development thinking and practice are necessarily 'better', simply that they are different and that that difference (as indicated here with reference to Ulawa Island in the Solomons) is significant in the context of `island' societies such as those in the South Pacific region.

In this regard, the thesis takes as its point of departure the work of Potter (2001) who has argued that development should be understood as "a multifaceted series of processes that impact on people and places in different ways and at different times", an approach that highlights the fact that "development is everywhere and is not synonymous with *progress*, which is normally conceptualised in a more positive manner as forward movement and advancement, with strong unilinear connotations" (Potter, 2001, p. 3). Also central to this study is the work of Gegeo (1994; 1998) who has identified thirty different development concepts in the local language of Kwara'ae on the island of Malaita in Solomon Islands, concepts that are of fundamental importance in any discussion of development as it impacts on the people of Kwara'ae. Similarly, based on a study conducted amongst the people of Are Are (also on the island of Malaita in Solomon Islands), Roughan (1986) insists that development should be a "transformation of consciousness which liberates people from feeling that they are victims of development to making them feel they control their own destiny (empowerment of people); people taking charge of their own lives, and planning for their own future; internal growth within people" (Roughan, 1986, p. 15). For Roughan, because development involves the "transformation of . . . consciousness" it is primarily a

"spiritual, cultural and political issue and only secondarily an economic question" (Roughan, 1986, p. iii)

As an `island' society, there are unique and peculiar geographical and historical events and processes at work that have contributed to making Solomon Islands what it is today. A social and historical perspective inevitably emphasises the fact that society is constructed and re-constructed, shaped and reshaped over time and space. Solomon Islands, like all human societies, is the product of social and historical processes, and therefore is itself a social and historical construct. In a sense, this broadly defined post-modern paradigm stands in contrast to Enlightenment rationalism which seeks to build future and better societies on the basis of rational principles. Enlightenment rationalism, as will be argued in *Chapter 3*, has, with its attendant universal pretensions, underpinned mainstream development discourses, those discourses which have shaped perceptions of imperialism and colonisation. Here, Solomon Islands people and Solomon Islands development activities will be conceived in post-modern rather than Enlightenment terms – not in terms of a stable society advancing towards an 'ideal', but in terms of a fragmented political grouping that is constantly being shaped and reshaped by the pressures of internal and external forces. Of course, this way of understanding development is by no means uncontested given the debate over the terms 'post-modern' and 'post-development' and the links between them.

1.5   Conceptual framework: Of spaces and metaphors

As already indicated, this study is located within the context of a post-modern conceptual and theoretical framework. This presupposes that the approach taken will relate to development conceived in terms of culture (Hooper, 2000; Schech & Haggis, 2000; 2002) or of societal difference (Gegeo, 1994; Simon, 1999). In fact, development is conceptualised here not only in economic terms, but in *both* social and cultural terms, in terms of both social and cultural *difference*. Within this context, Solomon Islands is conceptualised as a political entity that encompasses significant social and cultural differences. *Both* the status of Solomon Islands as a distinct political entity (different in many ways from other political entities and, in particular, different from those political entities that have dominated development discourse epitomised by the metaphor of the `continent') *and* the reality of internal social and political differences are seen as being fundamental to an adequate understanding of development activities in Solomon Islands in the years following political independence.

Locating the discussion of development in post-modern terms, in terms of difference (rather than deficit), lends itself to an essentially ontological approach, that is, to an approach that focuses on describing Solomon Islands people and Solomon Islands development processes in their own terms rather than in comparative terms. The focus will be on describing them as they are rather than on describing them in terms of, or in relation to, some concept of how they 'ought to be'. Within the context of this essentially ontological perspective, the main conceptual framework employed is the notion of *space* (Elden, 2001) and that of

space as metaphor (Hans Blumenberg, as cited in Raman, 2002). However, *time* is also considered to be relevant. As Elden (2002, p. 3) observes:

> [Although] there has undoubtedly been a heavy bias in favour of history and time in the past, to swing too far the other way through a privileging of geography and space is no solution. Yet much recent work … does precisely that. Instead, we need to think of the two together: we need to both historicize space and spatialize history. In other words, rather than solely providing an analysis of how the meaning and use of the word `space' has changed over time – a useful analysis to be sure – we need to recognize how space, place and location are crucial determining factors in any historical study. This is the project of spatial history.

The project of the spatialisation of history has also been described by Elden (2000, p. 6) as a **"**mapping of the present" (p. 6). The concept of space as a major unifying element is emphasised in the works of Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. Indeed, Heidegger's tripartite conceptualisation of space is particularly relevant here. For Heidegger (1967)[5], space could be conceived in terms of what I shall refer to here as 'world space' (a 'container' for objects), 'functional space' (the spaces that are relevant to our everyday actions), and 'self space' (the way in which each individual 'centres' himself or herself, judging all other things relative to that centred self). There is a sense in which mainstream development discourse both places others in 'world space' and judges them relative to its own 'self space', denying to them their own 'functional space'

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[5] In view of his political persuasions, it may seem paradoxical to make use of the ideas of Heidegger in a work of this nature. However, I do not believe that Heidegger's personal or political views are relevant. Also, I would like to acknowledge Associate Professor Winifred Crombie's assistance in helping clarify Heidegger's tripartite conception of space. For that, see also, Yoko Arisaka, 1995, 'On Heidegger's theory of space: A critique of Dreyfus', *Inquiry 38*(4), 455-467.

and their own centred 'self-space'. My aim is to emphasise the fact that Solomon Islanders inevitably view development activities in terms of their own 'functional spaces' and their own 'self spaces'. What is relevant and important for Solomon Islands (as a political entity) in terms of development activities will not necessarily be what is relevant and important for other political entities. What is relevant and important for some Solomon Islanders (as individuals) in terms of development activity will not necessarily be relevant and important for other Solomon Islanders.

Injecting an awareness of 'space' into historical study is the point of purchase of this thesis as a description of the nature of contemporary Solomon Islands society and the process of development in Solomon Islands. Both of the variables to which reference has been made (space and time) are considered against the backdrop of the social and the historical, including the colonial and the geographical context of Solomon Islands. Thus, an essentially post-structuralist paradigm is reinforced by a more structuralist one, by a consideration of those social and historical factors that have contributed towards the shaping of Solomon Islands. In this context, it is important to note that although Solomon Islands is treated as a political entity in its own right and although Solomon Islanders are treated as being culturally and socially diverse, it does not follow that the study will be irrelevant so far as other Pacific Islands and Pacific Islands peoples are concerned. In fact, there will inevitably be points of contact with other peoples and other political entities. In this regard, and in a wider context, when reviewing *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Chatterjee, 1986) and *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias* (Nandy, 1987), Dossa (1992, p. 561) notes that, as

Chatterjee asserts, "collusion between Western Reason and Western Capital is unmistakeable in the domination of the Third World", especially "the far-reaching sway of the European epistemic framework on intellectual life and social practice".

This thesis does not attempt to extricate Solomon Islands and Ulawa ways of thinking about development wholly from the European epistemic framework which underpins mainstream development discourse. Nevertheless, the process of stating and articulating Solomon Islands and Ulawa understanding of development implies resistance, a challenge to the mainstream and dominant forms of development discourse. So to help augment the study, the other conceptual device employed in the thesis, a device that is consistent with the overall post-structuralist emphasis, is metaphor, a device that Raman (2002) has both used and justified as being a relevant tool of intellectual analysis. The island metaphor that is fundamental to the discussion here is intended to both extend conceptual understanding and to relate concepts back to the historical processes underlying their formation. As Raman (2002, p. 11) observes, a robust application of metaphor enables the researcher to critique, unmask, demystify and de-legitimize intellectually dominant discourses and paradigms and their attendant underlying philosophies and ideologies. The theorisation of Solomon Islands development and society through the concept of `space' and the metaphor of Island – island-space conceptualisation – is intended to signal a move away from a deficit model and an attempt to complement Hau'ofa's (1993a; 1993b; 2000) now famous, thesis: *Oceania: Our Sea of Islands*.

Underlying the island-space conceptualisation as applied here to Solomon Islands is the belief that there *are* realities that are common to other Pacific Islands countries' contexts and experiences, especially the nearby Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. In the wider Pacific Islands context, however, whether there are `Islands in the far Seas' or a `Sea of Islands' – the Epeli Hau'ofa thesis – does not alter one fundamental reality: that is, what we have in the Pacific Islands region are essentially `islands' as opposed to `continents'. This stated contrast and juxtaposition between `island' and `continent' is fundamentally important when explaining social and historical processes as these occur against an empirical or geographical backdrop. As Said (in Katz & Smith, 2003, p. 642) has emphasised: "geography is the expression of history", or "history [is] expressed through geography".

The island–space concept that underlies this thesis is intended to act as a bridge between two important themes of the research - development in both Solomon Islands and Ulawa on the one hand and state reform in Solomon Islands on the other.

1.6   Reaffirming Solomon Islanders' views and voices

The perspective in this thesis is that of an indigenous Solomon Islander. As such, it is, I believe, my responsibility to be part of that movement which aims to reconstruct and reaffirm the indigenous mind. As Dossa (1992, p. 562), discussing the research of Nandy (1987), observes:

> Western development agendas are programmed to liquidate Third World
> cultures and values, [and] in the interest of sheer survival, [3rd World

countries have to] set limits to cultural and political globalism: [i.e., they need] the necessary distance to reinvent [their own] politics and life, and no less importantly, to reconstruct an . . . independent mind.

For Third World citizens, even though not all of the modern West is execrable, it is absolutely vital to break the chain of intellectual and psychological dependence on the visions and solutions of their colonial overlords, to reject the patterns of mastery that `distort the cultures and minds, especially the values and self-concepts, of the sufferers'.

In "structuring their utopian vistas", Third World intellectuals are "compelled to present their culture as their point of departure" (Dossa, 1992, p.562). This reference to culture as a critical point of departure in social thought is an important theme in contemporary post-modern development discourse. Even so, for a country as culturally diverse as Solomon Islands, the problem involves not so much "presenting their culture" as presenting the cultures. It is for this reason that one particular viewpoint – that of the inhabitants of Ulawa Island – is focused on in *Chapter 6* as a case study. It is not assumed that the views and experiences of the people of Ulawa Island will necessarily reflect those of other Solomon Islanders. Rather, the assumption is that their views and experiences will provide some indication of the complexity of the context in which development activities take place in Solomon Islands. Within the overall context of the island metaphor (applied to Solomon Islands as a whole), the study of Ulawa Island and Ulawa Islanders is both literally and metaphorically that of 'an island within an island'. The voices of Ulawa Islanders are unique in one sense; in another sense, they are representative of the voices of other islanders – of other Solomon Islanders and of other indigenous peoples, more so, other Pacific Islanders because they too live on `islands' rather than `continents'.

1.7   Approach and method

The overall approach adopted in this thesis is largely qualitative rather than quantitative. Furthermore, because the thesis deals with development and with Solomon Islands society as a dimension of human diversity and experience, the methodology employed is broadly interpretive, or, more specifically, it is located within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 33):

> The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent concrete understanding), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures.

The thesis itself is also a case study of development activities and their effects in one place (Solomon Islands) at one time (the period since independence), within which there is another case study, that of Ulawa Islanders. However, as Punch (1998, p. 150) observes, a case study "is more a strategy than a method". Just as there are "different types of cases", so are there also "different types of case study" (p. 152). The case study presented here is essentially instrumental in nature (Punch, 1998) in that in both cases, Solomon Islands generally and Ulawa in particular, what is attempted is to illustrate the same thing, the nature and process of development over a period of roughly quarter of a century.

Methodology will be discussed in more detail in *Chapter 2* but it is important to note here that Solomon Islands cultures and traditions are by nature oral: Solomon Islanders pass on information and knowledge through oral and non-formal means, by way of narratives and stories, and through conversation and personal contact. They do not readily pass on such information and knowledge to

strangers. Furthermore, in some places, such as in Ulawa Island, people make a clear distinction, in passing on important and critical knowledge, between what they know and what they have been told or have heard. Given the essentially oral nature of Solomon Islands culture, it was considered inappropriate to conduct formal interviews. Indeed from the cultural point of view, getting people to participate in formal interviews would raise other issues such as compensating them for their time and the `knowledge' they would be sharing with you. Understandably, there would be those who would be less than forthcoming to help you in your research. There could be any number of reasons for this kind of reservation. One, people may be jealous of what you are doing and feel they do not want you to be more successful than themselves. Two, in Ulawa Island and Solomon Islands generally, reciprocity is an important part of life. This practice is intrinsically related to the island-space concept-metaphor explained earlier, in that the person you formally interview expects, in turn, some kind of gift or favour from you in recognition of their help. This is where members of the extended family and close friends come into play. With those you are closely related to and considered to be a friend - there is an implicit understanding that your success is also their success. So this contextual reality had major implications for the methodology employed in the thesis. Therefore, apart from information gained from written sources, the data were collected in semi-structured interviews with people with whom I had personal contact. These interviews were conducted in informal settings and the emphasis was on personal/ individual experiences.

1.8   Significance of the thesis

Development continues to occupy the minds and imaginations of numerous Solomon Islanders and state reform has, in the post-ethnic conflict era of Solomon

Islands society, also emerged as the next most important concern aside from law and order, and the economy. In fact as far as state reform[6] is concerned, the Kemakeza government (December 2001 – March 2006) had hoped to introduce in parliament the state reform bill in 2005 but have had to defer it till after a new government was elected in the next general election which was held on 5 April 2006. It is expected that the next government will take the matter further[7]. In the meantime, the national government continues to extend to all Solomon Islanders an invitation to contribute to the ongoing discussions about state reform in Solomon Islands. However, already there are calls by different provincial government leaders for the national government to speed up the process of state reform. It is perhaps instructive to point out that in Solomon Islands the issue of state reform is not merely about good governance (Peter Larmour, 1996a; 1996b; 1997; 1998; Futa Helu, 1997; Stephanie Lawson, 1997), nor is it a recent issue. As Mamaloni[8] (1992, p. 17) points out:

> It would not be quite true to say that in Solomon Islands, only the elites were questioning the performance and presence of the British Administration. During the two Constitutional Reviews in the 1970s the majority of Solomon Islanders explicitly stated many disagreements with the Colonial government. They advocated a Home Rule System or system

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[6] The Kemakeza government had a `Public Awareness On the Draft Federal Constitution of Solomon Islands' document posted on the internet (See http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb/Downloads/DraftConstitutionAwareness.pdf).

[7] The Grand Coalition government of Solomon Islands under Manasseh Sogavare has indicated that adopting a new federal constitution for the Solomon Islands remains one of its top priorities. (See Government Communication Unit, 25 May, 2006, `Grand Coalition Pursues Adopting New Constitution'. In http://www.commerce.govt.sb/COMUNIT/PR25thMay2006.htm).

[8] Before independence, Solomon Mamaloni was Solomon Islands first Chief Minister. After independence, he was the nation's second Prime Minister.

of government that would not only recognise but entrench the systems of traditional laws and authorities. There was strong emphasis to involve traditional chiefs in the decision-making levels of the government.

Mamaloni (1992, p. 17) also observed that the "same views were repeated over and over again and are now recorded in the Reports of the PGC (Provincial Government Review Committee) and the CRC (Constitutional Review Committee) of 1986/1987". Despite the overwhelming support for decentralised government by Solomon Islanders, "our Constitutional authors for reasons unknown, always omitted these fundamental principles of our communities and indigenous people" (p. 17).

In what would later become an unexpected reality[9], Mamaloni (1992, p. 17) also made the following remarks:

> There has been an unanimous feeling amongst our people that the system of government in the Solomons is unsuitable in terms of general development programming and the recognition of traditional rights and customs. The delay in providing reforms wanted by our people has caused increased frustrations, so much so that during the 1970s, the Western Province campaigned to become a sovereign country of its own – secession. Such feelings persisted after independence and today the popular cry from our people is for a federal form of government.

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[9] This became what is generally referred to as the ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands. In the latter part of 1998 a clandestine militia group emerged. Consisting mainly of young men in organized bands, and calling themselves the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA), they began harassing settlers from other islands in rural northern Guadalcanal, both to the east and west of Honiara. A lot of these rural settlers were people from the island of Malaita. See Jon Fraenkel (2004) for a detailed coverage of the ethnic conflict between Guadalcanal and Malaita militia groups.

This thesis is therefore of particular significance to Solomon Islanders - both those who are directly involved in development and state reform processes, and those who are not. However, it is also relevant to other 'island' communities whose people are involved in development activities, and to those who are concerned that the theories and practices associated with mainstream development discourse have had so little positive impact in so many areas of the world. There are four main areas where I believe the thesis makes a contribution to existing knowledge and understanding:

- Development initiatives have failed to enhance the standard or quality of life of people in many areas of the world. There is increasing recognition that this may be, in part at least, attributable to the fact that these initiatives have failed to take proper account of local circumstances, including the experiences and understandings of development that are associated with peoples, cultures and contemporary contexts that are very different from those of `development experts' (see for example, Mawdsley & Rigg, 2002). In considering development activities in the context of local circumstances in a particular area (Solomon Islands) over a specific time period (the years since the gaining of independence) and with reference to the experiences and understandings of the local people, this thesis aims to play a role in clarifying the issues involved and, therefore, in preparing the way for the creation of a better, more productive approach to development in the future.

- Dependency and under-development theories may be intellectually satisfying as an academic activity. However, in focusing on the social and

economic `condition' of indigenous people rather than their social and cultural `nature' in a contemporary context, they do nothing to improve their lot. Nor do they have any real explanatory power in relation to the `dependency mentality' that is said to beset many rural Pacific Islanders. In addressing issues relating to the process of development in a specific contemporary societal context, this thesis has the potential to assist in revealing and explaining the reasons why dependency theory, so persuasive at a surface level, provides so little genuine insight into the factors that have inhibited modern social and economic development in communities such as that of Solomon Islands.

- Sir Nathaniel Waena, Governor-General of Solomon Islands, called for 'homegrown' solutions to the problems of Solomon Islands when he was Minister of Provincial Government. Thus far, only a handful of indigenous Solomon Islanders have a doctorate in the area of the social sciences. Indeed, the first indigenous Solomon Islander to have been awarded a doctorate in the social sciences was David Gegeo (1994, p, xxiii) who had this to say:

> I hope the [PhD] dissertation will serve as a model for aspiring Solomon students, that we Solomon Islanders can and should speak for ourselves rather than always being spoken of and for by others. It is we who must take the leadership in finding solutions to our own national problems and shaping the direction in which Solomon Islands is to develop.

- Research in the area of development is often conducted by those who have little personal knowledge or direct experience of the lives of those who have, as yet, received little benefit from development activities. Although this thesis has been conducted in an academic context, it has, nevertheless, been conducted by a Solomon Islander with direct reference to the lives and views of other Solomon Islanders. It represents, therefore, an 'insider's view' and is an attempt to make a personal contribution to the post-ethnic conflict phase of Solomon Islands society, a phase in which the rebuilding process that may lead to a better future for Solomon Islanders is already under way. In some respects, this same hope and aspiration was expressed by Ken Cole (2005, p. 334) when he observed that the "activity of professional intellectuals should be to facilitate creative thought by disadvantaged people, who, in fighting for the right to participate in the organization of their lives, create their social future."

- National development policy and planning in Solomon Islands has been, and continues to be, highly centralised. In questioning the value of such centralisation at a time when Solomon Islands is in a critical phase as it moves from a provincial to a state system, it is hoped that this thesis may effect a change of direction that will lead to positive outcomes in the area of development.

1.9   Outline of the thesis

In addition to this introductory chapter, there are a further six chapters as follows:

Chapter 2 outlines the approach and methodology;

Chapter 3 provides a critical review of selected development literature, focusing on the value-laden nature of mainstream development literature;

Chapter 4 provides a description of contemporary Solomon Islands society, making reference to the island-space concept/metaphor and using two other metaphors – that of the betel nut and that of the 'wantok' – to help clarify the description.

Chapter 5 describes the process of development in Solomon Islands, focusing in particular on the development policies and action plans of national governments from 1978 to 1998 and on the impact (or otherwise) of these policies and action plans.

Chapter 6 describes the process of development in Solomon Islands at the rural area level, with a particular focus on Ulawa Island. In addition, state reform is discussed in terms of its major implications for national development policy and planning in relation to Solomon Islands society. In particular, the discussion of state reform centres on the changing nature of the role of the nation-state and its impact on the nature of contemporary Solomon Islands society and on the process of development in Solomon Islands.

Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, argues that although Solomon Islanders, particularly those who have occupied positions of power and authority, must accept some responsibility for the overall failure of development activities, it must

also be recognised that they, in common with Solomon Islanders generally, have been victims of imposed ways of thinking about, and engaging in, development activities that are simply not appropriate in the context in which they operate.

Chapter 2

An outline of the research methodology

2.1   Introduction

Human beings undertake research primarily to help them to reach a better understanding of existing problems and, through the knowledge and understanding gained, overcome, or partially overcome, these problems. The research problem here is that of explaining the process of development in Solomon Islands over the past quarter of a century. In order to better understand the problem of development in Solomon Islands, it is important also to understand the nature of Solomon Islands society itself. In order to understand Solomon Islands society and the process of development in Solomon Islands over the period in question, it is also important to understand the overall process of state reform during that period. Thus, Solomon Islands society, state reform and the process of development in Solomon Islands are all the subjects of investigation here. In each case, it has been necessary to select appropriate research methods and to locate an appropriate 'voice' or perspective.

2.2   Locating 'space' in qualitative research

As Punch (1998) notes, it is the research topic and research question that determine the research approach. The decision to undertake qualitative research here related directly to the nature of the research (see *Chapter 1*) which required taking a "naturalistic approach to the world . . . [and studying] things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, pp. 4 – 5).

Attempting to understand problems relating to development in the context of Solomon Islands necessarily involves paying careful attention to internal issues - issues relating to the nature of contemporary Solomon Islands society and issues relating to state reform. External issues – issues relating to the external processes that impinge upon Solomon Islands – are focused on only where they are considered to be of direct relevance. Thus, for example, in *Chapter 3* the impact of global development discourse on development activities in Solomon Islands is discussed in the context of a critical review of the international development literature.

Qualitative research is a situated activity, the observer/researcher being located in relation to the research data (rather than, for example, in a laboratory). S/he is involved in the collection, presentation and representation of that data (data concerning social reality) using, for example, field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs and memos. In this particular case, I have also used much of my own knowledge, including recollections and interpretations of things that I have either seen, heard and/or experienced.[10] Because the overall aim of

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[10] Although I left home at an early age to attend formal education, I have never missed the opportunity to return to either Solomon Islands whenever I was overseas or to Ulawa when I was at secondary school on Guadalcanal. The significance of personal experience was expressed one day by my uncle (my father's only brother – the elder of the two – who shares with me the family name, Rohorua) when both he and my father were still alive. Once when I had returned home to Ulawa for Christmas holidays – I was at the University of the South Pacific then doing undergraduate studies – he expressed his delight and thankfulness that we (that is, his own sons and his nephews) were able to journey together with them (my father and uncle) for some considerable period of time. He and my father had been raised by relatives (living both literally and metaphorically on crumbs) having lost both their parents at quite early ages, only my uncle

qualitative research is to understand more about the ways in which people go about their daily lives, I believe that it is important to clarify my own position – to outline my own personal and contextual space – in relation to the research, something that is also relevant in a context where conducting formal interviews (in the case of Ulawa Island) would present considerable difficulties.

As noted already, this research project involves Solomon Islands and is, therefore, of direct relevance to me as a Solomon Islander. However, Taylor and Bogdan (1998) have claimed that it is not advisable for researchers to conduct research on subjects familiar to them in that this has the potential to compromise the rigour of the exercise. Although I accept that there is a need for caution, I also believe it is important that researchers do involve themselves in matters of direct relevance to their own lives, thus providing insights and information to which an 'outsider' might lack access. This particular point is especially important in the context of the transfer of knowledge in an oral cultural context (see *Chapter 1)*. In the case of Ulawa, knowledge which is being passed on orally is generally of two kinds: information that can be personally verified, and information that has been passed on by someone else. The information about Ulawa Island that is discussed in *Chapter 6* is of both kinds.

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having been old enough at the time to remember what his parents looked like. So my uncle, as the senior family member, always cherished the idea that we (the children), unlike the two of them, would not have to fend for ourselves as we grew up and journeyed with them through life. For us, both immediate and extended family represented an important resource, something that my uncle recognised as being potentially of very real significance.

2.3   Research principle

As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001, p. 1) observe, "fitness for purpose" must be the guiding principle in research. Thus, "ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions" which "give rise to methodological considerations" and these, in turn, "give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection" (p.3). In this case, the ontological consideration that acts as a driver for the research is my identity as a Solomon Islander working within a university context. Accommodating these two aspects of my identity (Solomon Islander and university-based researcher) inevitably leads to a questioning of certain perspectives and paradigms. In fact, as Rist (1997, p. 247) notes:

> [Even] authors least inclined to question the Western premises of 'development' are forced to admit that 'the theorization of post-development is probably the essential task today'. Thus, in parallel to the proliferation of dissident experiences in the South, there is clearly an area of theory in which research needs to be organized. But agreement is more difficult to reach when it comes to defining the framework for such research. For either it is considered . . . that the seriousness of one's conclusions must be guaranteed by the concepts and models of 'normal science', in which case there is a risk of not discovering anything new; or else one starts by attaching greater importance to history and anthropology, for example, and exposes oneself to the accusation of scientific light-mindedness.

In attaching greater importance to history and anthropology than has sometimes been the case, researchers do not leave themselves open to charges of 'scientific light-mindedness'. In fact, as I hope is the case here, the redirection of focus can lead to new and significant insights. Hence the relevance of the research principle

based upon my own identity as a Solomon Islander and university-based researcher.

2.4   A constructivist-interpretive paradigm

As Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 33) note, there is a sense in which all research is interpretive:

> All research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Some beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, whereas others are highly problematic and controversial. Each interpretive paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher, including the questions he or she asks and the interpretations the researcher brings to them.

The research reported here not only involves an interpretive paradigm but also, and more particularly, a constructivist interpretive paradigm, that, as noted earlier, "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co create understanding), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures", one in which terms such as "*credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35).

Replacing naturalistic interpretation is interpretation in terms of "inter-subjective meanings as constituted in culture, language, symbols, and so forth" (Schwandt, 1993, p. 266). Within the constructivist family of approaches, "at least three strands are evident – the ethnographic, the ontological, and the moral-political" (p. 264). In this case, it is the ontological that is uppermost. I see my role as being

primarily that of interpreter rather than legislator notwithstanding the fact that I do make recommendations and suggestions based upon my observations, particularly in *Chapter 6* when issues of state reform in relation to national development policy and planning are discussed.

I have, therefore, described my approach to this research project as interpretive, constructivist and ontological following Schwandt (1990, pp. 264 & 266-7). In using the term 'ontological', I take my cue also from Gadamar (1967, see especially the second part, pp. 151-341) who argues that interpretation and understanding are not, in fact, methodological problems but ontological ones (see also Richard Bernstein, 1983 (p. 34)). Following Bernstein (1983, p. 35), Schwandt notes, in the ontological context, hermeneutics is not "an intellectual stepsister to the methods of the social sciences" (Schwandt, 1990, p. 264). Rather, it is, in Heidegger's terms (1967, pp. 78-90) a way of "being-in-the-world". The ontological strand of the constructivist family-of approaches, "appears to find greater affinity [than does the ethnographic strand] with the humanities than with the social sciences", something that "reflects the German tradition of viewing the social disciplines as forms of moral sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) sharing characteristics with the humanistic disciplines" (Schwandt, 1990, pp. 264-7) (see also Richard Bernstein, 1983 (p. 35)).

In this thesis, the moral underpinnings of the ontological strand are not explicitly discussed. On the whole, the ontological interpretive methodology of the thesis is closely related to the conceptual framework, which is outlined and discussed further, below.

2.5   An emergent conceptual framework

The conceptual framework within which this thesis is articulated, one in which metaphor plays a significant role, emerged over time as the research progressed and is, in this sense, a direct response to issues that emerged during fieldwork. The descriptive component aims at "making complicated things understandable" (Punch, 1998, p. 15) and is generally preferred to explanation in that the latter may involve over-simplification. In effect, the descriptive approach which characterises the thesis is predicated on a 'spatial turn' in social theory and a 'cultural turn' in development studies. Above all, the primarily descriptive approach adopted here is intended to accommodate perspectives of Solomon Islanders located within their own cultural space. Thus, if development can be defined as "the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, p. 3), then what constitutes improvement and what is appropriate intervention obviously vary according to class, culture, historical context and relations of power. Hence, for Nederveen Pieterse (2001, p.3) also, "Development theory is [THUS] the negotiation of these issues".[11]

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[11] Nederveen Pieterse (2001, p. 3) argues that: "The strength and the weakness of development thinking is its policy-oriented character. This is part of its vitality and inventiveness. It is problem driven rather than theory-driven. It is worldly, grounded, streetwise, driven by field knowledge, not just book knowledge. In part for the same reasons, development thinking ranks fairly low on the totem pole of social science. As applied social science, development thinking has a derivative status. It has more often been a follower of frameworks developed in other sciences than a trendsetter. It has been a net importer of social science theories and has been influenced by other social sciences more than it has influenced then".

Nederveen Pieterse (2001, p. 3) has listed some of the social science paradigms imported by development theorists at different times. These include evolutionism, Marxism, neomarxism, Keynesianism, structural functionalism, neoclassical economics and poststructuralism. At the same time, he notes that there is at least one theory – dependency theory – which was developed within the discourse of development itself and which has had a global impact, inspiring, in fact, another theoretical development, world-system theory. Thus, it is within the context of launching a challenge to a theory developed within development discourse, that is, dependency theory, that I have located this discourse, a discourse in which metaphor plays a significant role.

2.6   Space and other metaphors

2.6.1   Space

Social reality is complex and is now sometimes conceptualised in spatial terms. Thus, for example, Crang and Thrift (2000, p. 1) note: "Space is everywhere in modern thought. It is the flesh that flatters the bones of theory." Space as a tool of academic enquiry "is . . . a representational strategy" (p.). It offers a type of flexibility that is entirely appropriate within a postmodern context (see, for example, Nederveen Pieterse (2001)).

2.6.2   Other metaphors

Along with space, there are three major metaphors used in this thesis: 'island', 'betel nut', and 'wantok'.

The Solomons is a series of islands within a single political domain. From a conceptual perspective, however, Solomon Islands is treated, metaphorically, as a

single island, that is, as an 'area' or 'space' separated from the 'mainland' or 'continent' of development theory and practice, an island space that will yield answers to its own questions in its own terms.

Supporting the 'island' metaphor are those of the 'betel nut' and the 'wantok'. The 'betel nut' metaphor is intended to help explain the sociology of Solomon Islands society, while the 'wantok' metaphor is intended to help explain the characteristics of the modern Solomon Islander.[12]

It is argued here (see *Chapter 3*) that if development is essentially a product of European modernity, then Solomon Islands development is essentially a product of Solomon Islands modernity. In *Chapter 4*, the focus is on contemporary Solomon Islands society. In *Chapters 5* and *6*, it is on the process of development itself. Taken together, *Chapters 4 – 6* provide both descriptive and explanatory approaches to the nature of Solomon Islands society in the context of Solomon Islands modernity.

As Solomon Islands enters the twenty first century, the descriptions of Solomon Islands society and development offered here provide contextually-rooted conceptual and empirical data relevant to the articulation of a model of state reform in Solomon Islands that is developed further in *Chapter 6*. However, within the context of the largely descriptive case study approach adopted in

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[12] Whether or not there also exists a postmodern Solomon Islands society and postmodern Solomon Islanders is an issue that is not addressed directly in this thesis.

Chapters 4 – 6, the metaphor, particularly the space-based metaphor, plays a significant role.

2.7 An instrumental case study

Initially, the intention was to carry out a critical ethnographic case study of development in Ulawa Island. Hence, the initial focus of the thesis was on the exploration and articulation of an indigenous concept of development within that context. That intended research orientation was inspired by the work of Gegeo (1994; 1998) who conducted research on development in Kwara'ae in Malaita (his place of origin), identifying at least thirty words that express aspects of Kwara'ae understanding of development.

The initial plans in relation to the conduct of an ethnographic study proved impossible to realise. This became clear during the first of two planned research field trips to Solomon Islands in November and December 2002 (see *Appendix A*). The initial intention was to visit Honiara on the first of two field trips and Ulawa Island on the second. The difficulties encountered on the first field trip meant that the second was not attempted. Even so, the first field trip was useful to the extent that it demonstrated some of the dynamics of contemporary Solomon Islands society, dynamics that are also reflected in the country's development processes and experiences. The impact on research of this sort of contextual dynamic has been discussed by May (2001, p. 37) who observes that "the very objects that the social sciences are concerned with analysing are so often themselves the subjects of power struggles over who may control the rules, relations and resources that constitute them in the first instance".

The social phenomena examined by researchers have already been given meaning by participants, participants who may themselves make use of the results of social science-based research in a number of ways. Thus, there will always be cross-fertilisation between everyday language and everyday understandings on the one hand, and research-based language and understandings on the other. May (2001, pp. 37 – 38) notes that:

> [The] results and practices of social research also feed back into social life; people engage in the interpretation of its findings and are co-participants in its process. . . . Given this 'feedback' of research into social life, researchers have to make a connection between language which is used in social theory and the methods of interpretation which people already use in attributing meaning to their social environment. Social theory, in other words, must take account of people's everyday understandings. Anthony Giddens (1984) refers to this process as the 'double hermeneutic'. He even suggests that it would not be unusual to find a coroner who has read Durkheim's (1952) classic study on suicide (Giddens 1990: 42). This acknowledges that there is a constant slippage between the language which we use as researchers to understand and explain social life and the meanings which people already employ to get on with the business of everyday life.

Thus, research of the type in focus here must take account of people's everyday understanding. Hence, the decision to take a constructivist-interpretive approach and to make use of a conceptual framework that relates to the everyday experiences of the research subjects, an approach and framework that remained relevant even when it became apparent that an extensive ethnographic study of Ulawa Island would not be possible and would, therefore, need to be replaced by a largely descriptive account of development in Solomon Islands accompanied by a

more modest case study of Ulawa Island, an instrumental case study designed to provide an illustration of rural development (see *Chapter 6*). In the event, this thesis therefore employs the research strategy of an instrumental case study (Punch, 1998; Stake, 1995) which is in keeping with the research field experience as well as in concert with the qualitative approach and the constructivist-interpretive paradigm.

2.8 Some practical issues and implications

As indicated earlier, a primary aim of this study is to integrate discussion of development concepts in a particular area of the Solomon Islands (Ulawa Island) with discussion of the process of state reform in the Solomon Islands generally. In relation to both of these areas of investigation, a number of fieldwork trips to the Solomon Islands were incorporated into the original planning. However, political and social unrest during my initial fieldwork trip made the collection of data extremely difficult. It was therefore decided not to attempt further fieldwork trips but to redesign the thesis, combining the data I had been able to collect with the discussion of documentation that was already available such as, for example, development planning documents. In this way, aspects of the political and social structure of the Solomon Islands and their impact on development planning could be re-examined in the context of a combination of empirical data (from interviews with Solomon Islanders and the stories told by interviewees) and historical data and through the lens of a range of contextually appropriate metaphors such as, for example, the betel nut metaphor which captures the essentially tri-partite structure of Solomon Islands society (*kastom*, church and state), a tri-partite structure which, it is argued, is fundamental to development planning in particular and state

reform more generally. In this context, the overall aims of the research project can be restated as follows:

(1) To investigate the rationale behind national development thinking and planning in Solomon Islands since political independence in 1978, attending in particular to the extent to which issues of legitimacy are informed by an approach underpinned by Western notions of social reality inherited from the British.

(2) To demonstrate, through a case study of Ulawa Island, some of the ways in which current national development policy and planning fail to take adequate account of the views about development of the indigenous peoples, rural Solomon Islanders in particular, and effectively impose on them a national, government-led approach to change and development which is neither necessary nor necessarily beneficial.

(3) To consider the implications of (1) and (2) above for rural dwelling Solomon Islanders and other indigenous peoples.

In order to facilitate the investigation so far as participants are concerned, I set out a checklist of questions about which I had hoped to get some information. That checklist is included here:

- What does the term 'development' mean on a personal level?
- Do participants consider themselves to be 'developed'?

- What do participants believe affects their thinking about development?

- Do participants believe that development is a good thing or bad thing?

- What state of development do participants believe their community is in at the moment?

- Do participants believe that they and their communities could develop further and, if so, how?

- What do participants believe about the role that government plays in development?

- Do participants believe that government has been successful so far in its development efforts are concerned, why do they have the beliefs they do on this subject and what, in particular, do they relate these beliefs to?

- What role do participants believe churches currently play in development, how successful do they believe that role to be and do they believe that churches could they play a more central role?

- Why do participants have the beliefs they do about the role played in development by churches and what do these beliefs relate to in particular?

Because of the difficulties associated with the fieldwork trip, the information collected on each of these issues is less substantial than I had hoped it would be. An overview of the participants involved and a summary of their areas of contribution are outlined below.

During my visit to the Solomon Islands, I lived with my younger brother, Meffrey Awao Poenjili, and his family in our family home in Honiara. I therefore had time and opportunity to discuss the issues central to my research in detail. Meffrey, who supplied a great deal of information and opinion that has informed this thesis, has worked in the Solomon Islands public service since he left high school in 1985. His relevant experience and his honesty and integrity meant that I could rely on the information he provided. He was able to share with me what he knew from his work experiences and what he had heard from others. He was very pleased to do so not only because he was interested in the topic in its own right but also because he believed that it was both a duty and a privilege to be able to contribute what he could to support and further research in whose successful outcome he, as a member of my family, had a particular interest. During his time in the Solomon Island government public service, Meffrey had worked in the Physical Planning Office in the Ministry of Lands and Survey, the Honiara City Council and Guadalcanal Province Head Office at Point Cruz in Honiara. At the time of my field work, he was Planning and Monitoring Officer in the Rural Development Division of the Ministry of Provincial Government. It was he who made me aware of a major concept of development in Ulawa, *mwa'ora(nga)*, a concept which is central to the discussion in *Chapter 6*. This concept emerged out of a week long seminar/workshop (*The Ulawa/Ugi Constituency Development Profiling & Action Workshop*) held in April 2001 at Piru Piru Community High School near Su'uholo Village. That workshop was part of a UN aid funded project (run by the Ministry of Provincial Government) which involved development profiling of nine different Solomon Islands constituencies (including the Ulawa/Ugi constituency). The workshop was conducted by a team from the

Ministry of Provincial Government's Rural Development Division. The team consisted of Dr Nestor Petelos (who was also Team Leader and on UN Secondment to Solomon Islands for the constituencies profiling project), Alan Agasi and Meffrey Awao. Meffrey Awao was asked to put together the Ulawa/Ugi constituency development profile. At the time of my field research (October/November 2002), the Ulawa/Ugi constituency development profile was still in draft form. This was one of the documents I consulted in relation to my research. When Meffrey communicated the concept *mwa'ora(nga)* to me, he said that it emerged as one meaning of development from the workshop in Ulawa. He did not specify further. In fact, *mwa'ora(nga)* is a the term that is used to refer to healthy garden crops. At first, it seemed to me that the term conveyed the idea of a crop or plant `sprouting'. Later, however, after I returned to New Zealand and had more time to reflect on this Ulawa-based concept, I realised that it was both more multi-faceted and more significant (see *Chapter 6*).

Another concept important to the thesis that emerged out of discussions with Meffrey was that of Ulawa Island as an individual persona, something that contributed to my attempt in *Chapter 6* to explain development in terms of *mwa'ora(nga)*.[13]

The only formal interview that I had during my field trip was with Nathaniel Waena, MP for Ulawa/Ugi and Minister of National Unity, Re-conciliation and

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[13] Many other ideas some included in the thesis and some not, emerged out of discussions with Meffrey. Among those not included was the concept of 'backward development', a concept that, although it might initially appear counter-intuitive, actually makes perfect sense in the context of the spiritual and social thought of Ulawa.

Peace. I delivered a written request for an appointment along with an indication of the nature of my research and was invited to a meeting at his Office at Kalala House, Honiara from 9.00am to 10.00am on Friday 8 November 2002. I recorded that interview as well as taking notes during it. Because he already had an idea of the direction of my research, Nathaniel Waena was able (speaking in both English and Ulawa) to provide information without it being necessary for me to make more than a few requests for clarification. He communicated to me his thoughts on a range of issues, including aspects of the state and government, development, the Guadalcanal conflict, foreign laws and foreign relations (including foreign consultants). He also provided an analysis of what he felt needed to be done in order to ensure a secure future for the Solomon Islands. Following that meeting, I transcribed the tape, translating into English any sections in Ulawa that were immediately relevant to the research.

One of the most important things that emerged from my meeting with Nathaniel Waena was his reference to the fact that, in establishing themselves on Ulawa, our ancestors set up not only a dwelling place but also a spiritual entity, something that resonated in the way in which people conducted themselves and lived their lives, including the process of socializing children. The spiritual dimension of life in Ulawa was also referred to, but more indirectly, by a European instructor at the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Training School at Rove, Police Headquarters, West Honiara (personal communication Meffery Awao, Wednesday 20 Nov 2002).[14] After visiting Ulawa, he described it in three words:

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[14] This information was shared with Meffrey by our cousin, Michael Poki, who is a member of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force.

'lucky', 'interesting' and 'powerful'. The first of these can be translated into Ulawa as *mwarudja*(*nga*) (meaning luck in a spiritual sense). The second can be translated as *ha'a mwa'e mwa'e sae* (meaning to delight and entice at the same time, that is, to appeal to both the aesthetic and the emotional sense). The translation of the third - *nanama* – evokes spiritual power and authority.

Another important aspect of the information and opinion communicated to me by Nathaniel Waena was his view that development should be family-centred. In connection with this, he referred to the corrosive effects of both the state/government and the churches on peoples' attitudes towards *kastom* (i.e. local customs and traditions). This had, he believed, led to confusion, making it all the more necessary to have good leadership. He emphasised the fact that leadership was the key to establishing a 'home-grown' federal system of government (something to which he had made reference in the past). References to a 'home-grown' system have come to include, as Larmour (2005, p. 229) has pointed out, both institutions themselves and the processes by which they are adopted. One aspect of 'home-grown' solutions is, according to Waena, the full recognition of diversity. Thus, he criticised those who advise Solomon Islanders about the appropriate political structure for the nation in relation to their "failure to understand people's diversity". He noted that diversity "is acknowledged but not appreciated or properly understood by foreign visitors/advisors to Solomon Islands". Indeed, as noted later, the proposal in this thesis that constituencies are made the foundation block or cornerstone of contemporary Solomon Islands society has, as part of its rationale, the proper recognition of that diversity which characterises Solomon Islands.

Another important meeting so far as this thesis is concerned was one with John Moffat Fugui who was, at that time, a political appointee (advisor to the Prime Minister) employed by the government of Sir Allan Kemakeza. That meeting was held in the cabinet meeting room in the Prime Minister's office on Friday 22 November 2002 and lasted from 3.50p.m. to 4.10p.m. and from 4.25p.m. to 5.00pm. During the fifteen minute break, Mr Fugui photocopied some pages of a PhD thesis on Langa langa lagoon to which he had access. Having received my summary notes prior to the meeting, Mr Fugui was able to go ahead with his narrative without any prompting on my part. He covered a wide range of issues, including the Guadalcanal conflict, working in the PM's office, the security wire fencing around the offices of the PM and Treasury, David Gegeo's PhD thesis, a new doctoral thesis on Langa langa, national leadership, aid donors, Honiara in general (which he likened to an academic desert) and economic mismanagement.

One of the things that John Fugui emphasized was the apparent lack of active able leadership in the Solomons. He noted not only that those who had appropriate leadership qualities were not prepared to become involved in the political arena, and that many of those who might appear to have such qualities had already been compromised through the nature of their involvement in the past. He also noted that the lack of capable leadership meant that it was not possible to formulate policies that would create an environment in which Solomon Islanders could thrive, especially those Solomon Islanders who were willing to venture into the private sector. He was of the opinion that the public sector had also suffered from lack of foresight in the area of policy formulation, the result being

mismanagement. In addition to this, parochialism, particularly in the area of recruitment into positions of authority and responsibility, had had a negative effect on public service. He observed, for example, that the requirement that different provinces be represented in the public service could be self-defeating. Overall, capable people were are either not being recruited or not being promoted, a situation that might be remedied by having a wider regional base of government infrastructure such as would be the case in a constituency-based government structure. In such a structure, selection on the basis of merit would be more likely and there would be more scope for the employment of innovative people who were prepared to try out new ideas in the context of a new political structure.

John Moffat Fugui commented on the fact that working in the Prime Minister's office gave him a bird's eye view of the nation. This draws attention to one of the advantages of having strong central government. He also noted that it was consistent with Melanesian values to disperse the functions and resources of government at a level that is readily accessible to the majority of the people. I argue later that a two-tier system of government in which constituencies play a central role would be appropriate in relation to a combination of central and authority and local management.

A further point made by John Moffat Fugui is that David Gegeo's PhD thesis (Gegeo, 1994) "brings out the best in our culture". In locating a major part of the discussion of this thesis in a context with which I am very familiar (Ulawa Island), I have attempted to emulate that search for an essentially localised understanding that characterises the research of Gegeo.

Most of the other meetings that took place during my field trip involved informal and unstructured conversations and story telling. In many instances, I picked up bits and pieces of information which I recorded in my diary and field notes rather than involving people in interviews for which it would have been necessary to seek formal consent. One of the people with whom I was involved in informal conversations was my mother, Nesta Mamahe. My mother had no formal schooling. However, being born the daughter of a high chief in Mouta (both her parents are from chiefly families), she was well schooled in Ulawa traditions and culture/*kastom*. Both as mother and good gardener, she conceived development through the analogy of a tree which geminates and begins as a shoot (*pasu*), sprouts, grows and branches out (*atosara*), then matures (*toli*), New developments accrue from old processes (*pwito haolu*), and the whole cycle begins all over again. She conceives development as a cyclical process. Although it takes place in different ways at different stages, it remains the same (as a process) in some essential ways. Development, like life and death, and like the process of sustaining life itself, must always involve aspects of the old and the new. Central to effective development is continuity (see *Chapter 6*).

2.9   Sources and methods of data collection

The empirical data for the study are derived from both primary and secondary sources (Bickman, Rog & Hedrick, 1998, p. 18) and have been collected from three different sources: written sources, taped and informal interviews, and participant observation.

Much of the information presented in this thesis has been derived from written sources and published literature, including library books, government

publications, journals, magazine and newspaper articles, news items and internet sites.[15, 16]

Another source of information was a lengthy taped interview with a minister of the crown of the Solomon Islands government, collected on the field trip to Honiara,[17] and four other discussions of various length and duration with four different senior government officers. Brief discussions were also held with five other government officials but another five possible interviews with another five government officers did not eventuate. The other source of interviews (mainly informal) was from relatives from Ulawa Island and three other Solomon Islands *wantoks*, not from Ulawa Island. Indeed, there were altogether fifteen non-government persons that I had the opportunity to discuss development issues with, either directly or indirectly, regarding my field research. Finally, participant observation proved to be a useful source of data.

As a Solomon Islander who has lived, worked and studied in Solomon Islands and abroad (including Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Australia and New Zealand), I have had numerous opportunities to discuss (both formally and informally) with other Solomon Islander wantoks issues of development, society and state reform in

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[15] This is, in part, a result of the reorientation of the research resulting from the outcome of the field trip to Solomon Islands.

[16] The sources of the data are various and include national and international library collections (especially the libraries of the University of Waikato and the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji and Honiara), Solomon Islands written literature (collected from USP Centre library, the Honiara Public library and the Ministry of Provincial Government).

[17] Some of those who initially agreed to be interviewed proved to be unavailable later. For example, although the Speaker of Solomon Islands parliament agreed to supply written responses which were to arrive by post after I returned to New Zealand, these did not arrive.

Solomon Islands. I have found that the level of interest in politics more than outweighs problems associated with the generally low levels of literacy indicated in official government statistics. The generally very high level of interest in politics that typifies Solomon Islanders relates, in part at least, to the widely held perception in Solomon Islands that politicians, especially national and provincial leaders, have enormous power and authority and can bring about major social, economic and political development. Gaining access to what are perceived as being such powerful positions of influence is, therefore, a major preoccupation of many Solomon Islanders.

The personal experiences, interactions and observations to which I have referred helped inform the conceptual and methodological frameworks designed and used in the thesis, particularly so because my associations with my fellow wantoks (including friends and relatives) extended to people from all parts of Solomon Islands, men and women, young and old, schooled and unschooled, secular and ecclesiastical, urban and rural.[18] The significance of personal contacts is a reminder that the thesis is intended as much as a personal contribution to Solomon Islands as it is an academic exercise.

2.10   Overview

The three sources of data outlined above, along with the conceptual and methodological frameworks to which reference has been made, are, I believe,

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[18] This association with people from a wide spectrum of society is not uncommon among Solomon Islanders who attended secondary school in Solomon Islands, some of whom, like me, were fortunate enough to gain university degrees in the early years of Solomon Islands independence. Among the associations to which I have referred are university graduates who currently hold important positions of leadership in Solomon Islands.

sufficiently robust to satisfy the academic requirements of doctoral level research at the same time as providing a useful framework for analysis and interpretation of a kind that may be of direct relevance to Solomon Islanders.

Chapter 3

International literature on development: A critical review of selected publications

3.1   Introduction

In order to provide a background to the research conducted here, and, in particular, in order to provide a context in which development in Solomon Islands can be better understood, I offer here a critical review of some pertinent aspects of development literature, attempting to indicate the differing perspectives that characterise different strands of development discourse. However, in spite of the fact that there are differing perspectives, development discourse is fundamentally a Western phenomenon, one that, over time gained currency and legitimacy in former colonies of European imperial powers such as Solomon Islands. It is of considerable significance that such former colonies are now generally referred to as 'Third World' or 'developing countries'. For this reason, any critical review of development discourse is also, inevitably, a critical examination of aspects of the history, culture, rationality and social thought of Western society.

3.2   Defining development

Todaro (2000, p. 16), amongst others, has attempted to provide a comprehensive explanation and definition of modern social and economic development:

> *Development must . . . be conceived of as a multidimensional process* involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty. Development, in its

essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better [italics retained].

The multidimensionality to which Todaro refers implies complexity. However, notwithstanding the fact that Todaro refers to the multidimensional (and implicitly complex) nature of development, he also, at times, stresses the fact that it involves social engineering and is, for this reason, essentially linear in nature. This unilinear conception of society and change, one that places development at a level of abstraction which implies a significant degree of universality, was, until comparatively recently, fundamental to Western social thought although, as discussed in more detail later, it involves a failure to recognise the contextually-based nature of development. Locating Solomon Islands development generally, and that of Ulawa Island in particular, in the context of what is referred to as 'island-space' (see *Chapter 1*), effectively renders universal definitions of development, such as that proposed by Todaro, problematic.

So far as Edelman and Haugerud (2005, p. 1) are concerned, `development' is "an unstable term". (p.1). They qualified this perspective further by observing that whereas, on the one hand, development is "both an urgent global challenge and a vibrant theoretical field", it is also, on the other hand, unclear whether it is "an ideal, an imagined future towards which institutions and individuals strive [or] a destructive myth" (Edelman & Haugerud, 2005, p. 1).[19] Thus, although

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[19] This is the postist stance in development theory popularly propagated by Arturo Escobar.

conventionally 'development' may "connote improvements in well-being, living standards, and opportunities, [it] may also refer to historical processes of commodification, industrialisation, modernisation, or globalisation" (p. 1).

The instability and ambiguity surrounding development as a concept is a consequence of its conception as both "a legitimating strategy for states" and, at the same time, a way of asserting "citizen entitlement as well as state control" (Edelman & Haugerud, 2005, p. 1). Such ambiguity means that, in the final analysis, it is open to analysts to "focus on `development' as discourse, as policy or project blueprint, as historical process, or as self-propelled evolutionary process, the concept [having] become highly contentious, and [having] attracted attention from an astonishing array of scholars" (p. 2).

Rist (1997), in line with the perspective that underpins this research project, sees development in more contextual terms, perceiving the development problematic as being inscribed at the very core of Western imagery, and noting that conceptualisation of the growth process as continuing indefinitely is something that "radically distinguishes Western culture from all others" (Rist, 1997, p. 238). This cultural reading of development, a reading in which the development problematic is located specifically within Western imagery, is extremely significant although, as Hettne (2002, p. 7) observes, it may be that this perception is more directly relevant to the post World War II period than it is to later historical periods:

> The classical discourse, which had its roots in the late 1940s and was institutionalised in the 1950s and 1960s, assumed the possibility of an

autonomous, (inter)disciplinary field, containing a set of theoretical cores with development economics as a respected member of the family. The relevant theoretical schools, competing but yet in dialogue, were: *modernization*, *structuralism*, *dependency* and '*another development*', all normatively concerned with the specific problem of national development in the so-called 'Third World'.

The reconstruction of war-torn Europe provided the model for state-directed *modernization* of the 'new nations'. Development implied the bridging of the gap by means of an imitative process, in which the less developed countries gradually assumed the qualities of the developed.

Hettne clearly conceives of development in binary terms: the developed countries and the less developed countries. He also sees it as involving an imitative process, with 'less developed' countries striving for inclusion in the prestigious 'developed' category. This differentiation between developed and less developed countries, a differentiation that implies superiority of the one (developed countries) over the other (less developed countries), underpins mainstream development discourse which is also seen as involving an 'imitative process' (Desai & Potter, 2002) whereby the less developed countries aspire to become like the developed ones.

In this research project, the term 'mainstream development' is used interchangeably with 'modern development'. In order to fully understand the nature of mainstream/modern development, it is necessary to locate and describe its spatial, contextual origins. Mainstream development literature generally, and classical development discourse in particular, is rooted within a Western epistemic and ontological framework (see for example, Tarnas (1991); Escobar

(1995); Cowan & Shenton (1996); Rist (1997)). Furthermore, as Cowan and Shenton (1996, p. 2) observe, there is a fundamental distinction between 'development as intention' and 'development as process'. Underlying these differing perspectives on development are differing beliefs and ideologies, among the most significant of which are those that not only locate development thinking in relation to the European Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries (Osborne, 2001), but also locate present day post-modern sensibility in relation to the perspective that grew out of the European Enlightenment to the extent that postmodernism represents a challenge to the Enlightenment mode of thinking, a challenge to the hegemony of Western epistemic and ontological categories.

My aim here is not to offer an alternative to development strategies in Solomon Islands. Rather, it is to provide a description of development activities in one particular location, Solomon Islands, in relation to historical and global perspectives and, in doing so, to help provide a context in which these development activities, and responses to them, can be better explained and understood.

3.3 Philosophical and ideological foundations

3.3.1 Cultural and historical precedents

The notion of 'development' is closely associated with the idea of 'progress', an idea itself associated with the European Enlightenment (Osborne, 2001). Thus, although modern and mainstream development discourses have their empirical origins in the period following World War 2 (Hettne, 1995; 2002), their philosophical origins are rooted in the 17th and 18th centuries and are deeply embedded in Western culture and rationality.

Indeed, the Enlightenment ideals, which subsequently spawned other ideas and activities that later underpin development thinking and practices, themselves have antecedents in their opposition to medieval theism. As Tarnas (1991, pp. 320 – 321) explains:

> Medieval theism and ancient cosmism had given way to modern humanism. . . . The West had "lost its faith" – and found a new one, in science and in man. But paradoxically, much of the Christian world view [predominant in the Middle Ages] found continued life, albeit in often unrecognized forms, in the West's new secular outlook. Just as the evolving Christian understanding did not fully divorce itself from its Hellenic predecessor but, on the contrary, employed and integrated many of the latter's essential elements, so too did the modern secular world view – often less consciously – retain essential elements from Christianity. The Christian ethical values and the Scholastic-developed faith in human reason and in the intelligibility of the empirical universe were conspicuous among these, but even as fundamentalist a Judaeo-Christian doctrine as the command in Genesis that man exercise domination over nature found modern affirmation, often explicit as in Bacon and Descartes, in the advances of science and technology. So too did the Judaeo-Christian high regard for the individual soul, endowed with "sacred" inalienable rights and intrinsic dignity, continue in the secular humanist ideals of modern liberalism – as did other themes such as the moral self-responsibility of the individual, the tension between the ethical and the political, the imperative to care for the helpless and less fortunate, and the ultimate unity of mankind. The West's belief in itself as the most historically significant and favoured culture echoed the Judaeo-Christian theme of the Chosen People. The global expansion of Western culture as the best and most appropriate for all mankind represented a secular continuation of the Roman Catholic Church's self-concept as the one universal Church for all humanity. Modern civilization now replaced Christianity as the cultural

norm and ideal with which all other societies were to be compared, and to which they were to be converted. Just as Christianity had, in the process of overcoming and succeeding the Roman Empire, become Rome itself in the centralized, hierarchical, and politically motivated Roman Catholic Church, incorporate and unconsciously continue many of the latter's characteristic approaches to the world.

Hoogvelt (1982, p. 105) notes that 'development' as both discourse and ideology appears to combine aspects of an evolving Western European habit of thought:

> [The] seeds of the passion for progress were planted . . . by the unique configuration of the Western European belief-system which combined a Judaic Voluntarist conception of man, a Christian eschatological view of history and an Aristotelian notion of imminent change. . . .
>
> [The] conjoining of these three disparate cultural legacies [also understood as medieval theism, ancient cosmism and modern humanism] fruited into a view of 'inevitable yet man-made betterment through the ages' and sponsored an enduring sense of historical destiny and human purpose that became one of the more stable elements of the European cultural tradition.

This is a view shared by Rist (1997, p. 47) who argues that:

> [The] Western belief in 'development' has ancient roots, and by the late nineteenth century everything seemed in place, in terms of ideas, to embark upon the great adventure.

This 'great adventure' is that of European colonisation in the 19th century. The advent of the 'Age of Enlightenment' "merely turned the idea of 'inevitable yet man-made betterment' into a subject of systematic scientific enquiry" (Hoogvelt, 1982, pp.105-106), that enquiry itself underlying the process of modernity. In

order, therefore, to understand that process, it is important to understand what is often referred to as 'European Enlightenment'

3.3.2 European Enlightenment

Osborne (2001, pp. 120-121) provides the following overview of European Enlightenment:

> The Enlightenment refers to a period in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries during which the foundations of modern science and technology, together with rational and liberal ideologies of progress and development, were laid down. Beginning with a critique of the divine right of kings and of religion itself, Enlightenment thinkers developed a critique of society and a theory of a rational, ordered world. Many link the rise of Enlightenment reason with the work of Rene Descartes, who proposed rationality as the basic credo of all humanities and individualism as its central motif, however Enlightenment thought was fundamentally social in character rather than philosophical. It was a Europe-wide movement that drew on many sources and encompassed philosophy, political thought, literature and the beginnings of sociological thought.

In the context of this research project, the fact that Enlightenment thought developed as a critique of existing society is a significant issue in two important respects. First, mainstream development discourses are essentially normative in nature and are, significantly, underpinned by the avowed desire to change society for the better, although the process was initially conceived largely in terms of economic growth (see Rostow (1960)).[20] Secondly, because development deals

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[20] The underlying historical processes, are, however, manifested in the technological revolution in Western Europe beginning in England that brought about industrialisation and increased production and consumption of goods and services largely apparent in many developed countries today.

with societal change, it is as much a historical experience and process as it is an intellectual issue and important aspect of a society's social thought. Edelman and Haugerud (2005) drew attention to these inextricable associations when they posed the question: "What types of faith in progress motivate development theories and practices?" (p. 2) and provided an answer (p. 2) that they refer to as 'historical teleologies':

> The underlying historical teleologies [that motivate development theories and practices] include a presumed shift from kinship to contract, agriculture to industry, personalised to rational or bureaucratic rule, subsistence to capital accumulation and mass consumption, tradition to modernity, poverty to wealth.

Even more important, however, is the critical observation that on closer inspection, prominent Western writers, such as Adam Smith, Max Weber, Immanuel Wallerstein, and others, appear to present human history in such a way that "the end or the process itself [of human history] is made to fit a pre-existing design" (Edelman & Haugerud, 2005, p.2). Evidently, the emergence of the social sciences, especially sociology, took place in concert with vast and novel changes in European and Western societies generally, changes that resulted from the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1994, pp.213-5). In a similar way, recent development activities in Solomon Islands have taken place in the context of the political and social upheaval (especially following World War II) that accompanied transition to self-governing status. Just as Western European conceptions of development have been conceived in terms of a number of persistent metaphors, so too can Solomon Islands development be conceived of metaphorically. In each case, these

metaphors, different though they are, help contribute to our understanding of the processes and perceptions involved. In fact, it could be argued that just as the concept of development in Solomon Islands (and in Ulawa specifically) can be understood in terms of 'island-space', so the European or Western conception of development can be seen as having emerged from the conceptual and theoretical framework of a `continental-space'.

In Europe, Enlightenment thinking represented a reaction against aspects of the past, the notions of freedom and equality that characterised Enlightenment thinking giving rise (Osborne 2001, p. 121) to the historical process of modernity:

> Enlightenment thinking has to be seen in the context of the mythical and reactionary religious thought that preceded it, and the feudal social structures to which it was opposed, not in the light of postmodern concerns with millennial relativism. The French and American revolutions owed a great deal to the liberating and critical thought of the Enlightenment, in particular, the political ideas of equality and freedom before the law for all individuals, whatever their social origin. In fact to believe in the innate possibility of reason and goodness in all men, and women, was itself a somewhat revolutionary idea at the time, especially as women were not universally seen as being equal to men.

Unlike postmodernist thinkers such as Foucault, Habermas (1987) believes that 'the Enlightenment Project of Modernity' is not over yet.

As far as the West is concerned, both the French and American revolutions were important catalysts for important milestones in European modernity. Since modernity is so significant in relation to modern development discourse, it is important to give some consideration here to modernity itself.

3.3.3 Modernity and progress

Modernity and the notion of progress are often seen as being inextricably linked.

Thus, in the words of Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1994, p. 336):

> Most nineteenth-century sociology was based on the assumption of progress which was equated with industrialization. Technological advance was assumed to result in improvements in material welfare, reflected in enhanced standards of health and longer life expectancy. Industrialization was also associated with a growth in the rights of citizenship . . . literacy and education. Progress was the social manifestation of reason, knowledge and technology. With the advent of mass warfare, fascism and totalitarian governments in the twentieth century, sociology has taken a decisively pessimistic turn as confidence in the progressive nature of industrial society has evaporated.

> Conventional theories of progress failed to provide adequate answers to three fundamental questions about social change. (1) Which social groups benefit from progress? (2) Who defines what is to count as progressive? (3) Who decides what personal or social costs are tolerable in relation to what degree of progress?

Adding to this conceptual context, Jones (1993) sees modernity as "[implying] the constant pursuit of improvement in human lives and the pursuit of *progress*" so that unlike "traditional settings, where virtue lies in things remaining the same, in modern worlds change, development and improvement are the goals" (Jone, 1993, p.21). Essentially, modernity in its apparent disavowal of the past and of tradition espouses change and is oriented to the present and future. In other words, modernity is obsessed with novelty and the idea of the `new'. In fact, the European Enlightenment ideal of human progress was also equated with the ideologies of freedom and emancipation, presupposing that traditional European

society and traditional societies in general offer less human freedom and emancipation than is desirable. Therefore, in subscribing to the ideologies of freedom and emancipation, progress and modernity were conceived of as rendering greater human happiness to human societies, not only Western societies, but societies in general.

In modernity, there was a dogmatic faith in human rationalism, empiricism and positivism represented through science and technology, to help recreate the `right' if not necessarily the best society for human enjoyment. Jones (1993, p. 22) notes:

> The idea that humans can not only think about, and explain, their lives [i.e. produce *social theories*] but can employ them to change society for the better, is a specifically modern notion. The idea that *reason* can provide an agenda and a set of prescriptions for living, rather than relying on divine intervention and instruction, only began to prevail after the Enlightenment.

Higgot (1983, p. xii) discusses the influence of modernity on modern development thinking in terms of a change of worldview from "religious-superstitious to science, technology and rationality". Giddens (2003, pp. 1 - 2) emphasises the fact that this also involved an anti-dogmatic stance and a belief in the capacity of human beings to shape the future:

> [Our] epoch developed under the impact of science, technology and rational thought, having their origins in seventeenth – and eighteenth – century Europe. Western industrial culture was shaped by the Enlightenment – by the writings of thinkers who opposed the influence of religion and dogma, and who wished to replace then with a more reasoned approach to practical life. . . .

> [The] Enlightenment philosophers operated with a simple but apparently very powerful precept. The more we are able rationally to understand the world, and ourselves, they thought, the more we can shape history for our purposes. We have to free ourselves from habits and prejudices of the past in order to control the future.

Implicit within the rationalism of the European Enlightenment is social engineering conceived of as a transformative-emancipatory process (Mertens, 2003) which is underpinned by the writings of Karl Marx "whose ideas owed a great deal to Enlightenment thought" and who argued that "we have to understand history in order to make history" (Giddens, 2003, p. 2) (see for example Karl Marx ,1950; 1964; 1970).

In the context of this discussion, it is significant to note that *reason* emerged as the legitimate and hegemonic instrument for social change, an important aspect of social theorising itself. Thus Jones (1993, p. 22) notes that the construction of social theories "reflects a concern not only with *how* we live, but how we *should* live; social theories of modern society try not only to describe and explain our social world, but to diagnose its problems and propose solutions" (Jones, 1993, p. 22). Research is regarded as being a critical aspect of social enquiry, the best way of finding solutions to social problems. However, the issue is not so much the "goal and direction of desirable change" as "how to do it" (p. 22). This issue of social inquiry – how to find the best solutions to social problems – is as much a conceptual and philosophical issue as it is a methodological one. After all, given the socio-political, philosophical and disciplinary vantage-points of the researcher or inquirer, there may be as many proposed solutions as there are solution

proposers. This being the case, development theory and development discourse are inevitably pluralistic, including mainstream, alternative and post-development paradigms (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001).

How, then, did a peculiarly Western and European outlook on development come to have global dominance? How did it come to overshadow other worldviews, other understandings of development?

3.4   Contemporary European dominance: A brief overview

To understand the hegemonic paradigm that characterises European and Western society, it is necessary to consider the historical context of European society. Arnold (2002) has argued that Europe's emergence from a regional to a world power between 1400 and 1600 can be related to three main factors: trade, religious self-righteousness and rationality.

Europe's aggressive pursuit of overseas trade accompanied its own expanding economy.[21] John Ralston Saul (1999), for example, endorses this proposition although his discussions of overseas trade emerge in a slightly different context:

> … look at the history of the British empire and you discover that the whole
> core idea of the British empire was you move in and start trading and then
> when you're not getting what you want in trade you go in and beat the hell
> out of them. It's trade, which led to the construction of the British and the
> French and the German, and the Italian empires.

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[21] The significance of the economy to European society explains the important role it plays in social analysis. A case in point is Karl Marx's 'Mode of Production' and related labour theories.

Clearly, overseas trade was one major factor in the emergence of Europe from a regional to a world power, the legacy of which remains with us today.

Second, Europe's experience of internal warfare and rivalry (due to its own internal disunity) coupled with an intermittent conflict with Islam "gave an additional confidence and aggressive swagger to European mariners and adventurers" (Arnold 2002, p. 60). In this respect, Raman (2002, pp. 4-5) concurs with Arnold as he explains that European contextual experience and process:

> The very formation of western Europe occurred, Marc Bloch points out, at a moment when it faced a triple threat: '[Europe] was attacked from three sides at once: in the south by the devotees of Islam, Arabs or their Arabized subjects; in the east by the Hungarians; and in the North by Scandinavians.' The first of these incursions was especially significant. Until the twelfth century, the Moslem and Byzantine world 'exercised a true economic hegemony over the West: the only gold coinage still circulating in … Europe came from Greek or Arab mints.' European colonialism (and, to an extent, "Europe" itself) grew out of a perceived need to defend against various Islamic powers and to *recover* lands ceded in the preceding centuries. Hence, the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Portugal and Castile fused into a move outward, first into North Africa and later into sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, to snatch further territory from Arab colonizers. The emergence of Europe and the establishment of its internal national boundaries were 'simultaneous with a transgression of these boundaries'.

Thus, there were '[few] if any, states outside Europe [which] possessed such a powerful combination of economic motivation and religious self-righteousness" (Arnold 2002, p. 60).

A third factor was the "developing spirit of enquiry and . . . rational approach to problem solving" (p.60). For Esteva (1992, p. 17), the first of these factors is the most significant. He regards "[economisation] and colonisation [as being] synonymous":

> [During] the 19th century, but in fact starting much earlier in Europe, the social construction of development was married to a political design: excising from society and culture an autonomous sphere, the economic sphere, and installing it at the centre of politics and ethics. That brutal and violent transformation, first completed in Europe, was always associated with colonial domination in the rest of the world.

In contrast to the views of Arnold (2002) and Esteva (1992) concerning the emergence of a Western (European) hegemonic paradigm are those of Blaut (1993) who argues that, although the significance of a convergence of economic and political interests cannot be overstated, the fundamental issue is not that of specific European traits, characteristics and circumstances, but the ideology of diffusionism, an ideology which underpinned colonialism.

The rise of Europe was accompanied by political and economic domination of foreign territories, the process of colonisation itself becoming part of the general hegemonic process (see, for example, Abu-Lughod (1991); Diamond (1997)). Thus, as Esteva (1992, p. 10) observes:

> In the third decade of the [20th] century, the association between development and colonialism, established a century ago, acquired a different meaning. When the British government transformed its Law of Development of the Colonies into the Law of Development *and Welfare* of the Colonies in 1939, this reflected the profound economic and political

mutation produced in less than a decade. To give the philosophy of the colonial protectorate a positive meaning, the British argued for the need to guarantee the natives minimum levels of nutrition, health and education. A 'dual mandate' started to be sketched; the conqueror should be capable of economically developing the conquered region and at the same time accepting the responsibility of caring for the well-being of the natives. After the identification of the level of civilization with the level of production, the dual mandate collapsed into one: development.

It could be argued (as many educated Solomon Islanders appear to believe) that the British did not live up to their responsibilities in relation to Solomon Islands. Certainly, they appear not to have helped prepare Solomon Islanders adequately for political independence (see *Chapters 4* and *5*).

In spite of the fact that development processes are complex and multidimensional, the 'Occidental worldview' (Sachs, 1992, p. 5) continues to exert enormous influence on global agendas and processes, not least on agendas and processes relating to social and economic development. Even so, there are differing perspectives that must be acknowledged (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, p. 77):

> [Broadly] speaking, then, the development terrain seems to be marked out into three overall positions: mainstream development (which, I will argue later, is by no means a coherent position), alternative development (which itself involves a range of perspectives), and post-development.

3.5   Modern development: contextual and historical origins

So far, I have noted that it has been argued that philosophically and ideologically, as well as socially and historically, modernity is derived from the European Enlightenment. Modern (contemporary) development discourse, being a product

of modernity, can therefore also be seen as being rooted in the Enlightenment. Desai and Potter (2002, p. 59) provide the following overview of contemporary development discourse:

> Right-wing stances on development can be regarded as having their origins in the Enlightenment and the era of modernity which followed. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment saw an increasing emphasis placed on science, rationality and detailed empiricism. It also witnessed the establishment of the `West' and `Europe' as the ideal. It was during this period that the classical economists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo, writing in the 1700s, developed ideas surrounding the concept of comparative advantage, which stressed the economic efficacy of global free trade and, in many senses, gave rise to the earliest capitalist strategies of economic development. These were followed by a plethora of dualistic and linear conceptualizations of development process, including modernization theory, unbalanced and unequal growth, and top-down and hierarchical formulations. Together, such approaches are generally referred to as `neo-classical'. Whatever, one's critical view of modernization, the approach usefully pinpointed the salience of transport as a necessary (although not sufficient) factor in the development equation. Such approaches are, of course, still alive and kicking, in the form of the `new right' orthodoxy, involving the `magic of the market' and the neo-liberal policies of structural adjustment, and very recently, poverty reduction strategies. All of these approaches can be traced back directly to the works of Smith and Ricardo.

The emergence of the European Enlightenment and, with it, the process of modernity is based also on a particular attitude towards the status quo, in effect, a secular challenge to the Christian religion and the dogma of the middle ages. Inevitably, therefore, there are dissenting voices, alternative perspectives as Desai and Potter (2002, p. 59) observe:

The antithesis to classical and neo-liberal views was provided by radical-dependency approaches in the 1960s. It is a reflection of the Eurocentricity of development theory that Andre Gunder Frank has become the name most associated with dependency. This is despite the fact that the approach essentially stemmed from the writings of structuralists in Latin America and the Caribbean. In respect of process, dependency theory was couched in terms of inverted cascading global chains of surplus extraction, and it was again all too easy to reduce this to simple dichotomous terms, involving polar opposites such as `core-periphery', `rich-poor' and `developed-underdeveloped'. It was left to world systems theory to stress that contemporary development has involved the emergence of a substantial semi-periphery, consisting of the newly industrializing countries (NICs) of East Asia and Latin America.

In contrast to the classical view, and in addition to radical-dependency, there is the post-modern paradigm (e.g. Lyotard, 1984) which aims to debunk prevailing meta-narratives. Located within this post-modern paradigm is the development discourse of Escobar (1995) whose devastating critique of earlier development discourses continues to be extremely influential. Even so, such critiques do not, I believe, represent the total emasculation of the development agenda. Rather, as Desai and Potter (2002, pp. 59 – 60) note, they bring to it a greater self-consciousness, a more developed awareness of what development can be about:

> The era of postmodernity may not be regarded as fitting the realities of the developing or poor countries in all respects, but the existence of these notions cannot be ignored in the analysis of the conditions faced by such nations. Early standpoints taking a less generic, less monumental and less linear view of the development process included what are referred to under the heading `bottom-up' and `agropolitan' approaches, which have come to include ideas of `another' development. More recently, the `postist'

stance afforded by postcolonialism has been added to the critique. This argues that the production of Western knowledge has been inseparable from the exercise of Western power. Ethical and moral considerations surface once more, this time in terms of the responsibilities which we carry for so-called `distant others'. Most of us have been trained to favour people close to home, our so-called `nearest and dearest', as opposed to those strangers who may be deemed more deserving, but who live far away. Many of the practical problems that are to be faced in the field of humanitarian assistance stem from this basic but enduring conundrum of development. Finally, it is notable that evolving conceptualizations of the roles of the state, civil society and social capital underpin continuing debates concerning development theory.

Mainstream development discourse is essentially a modern phenomenon. Rooted conceptually and theoretically in the European Enlightenment, and representing a counter movement in relation to ancient cosmism and medieval theism, mainstream development discourse, pervasive though it is, now faces a number of challenges. These challenges take the form of critical commentaries – labelled generically as 'postist-stances' (Desai & Potter, 2002) – drawing attention to the catastrophic consequences for non-Western peoples of much modern development activity.

3.6   Some contemporary development issues

Having established the conceptual and intellectual origins of modern development thought, it is important to consider development in its contemporary context, the primary aim being to locate an appropriate point of entry into the discussion of development as it relates to Solomon Islands. In this regard, it is not only the concept of development itself that requires consideration, but also the critical agents and stakeholders of development. Thus, consideration is given below to

three contemporary stakeholders of mainstream development in the Solomon Islands context.

3.6.1   State and development

Nederveen Pieterse notes that globalization and regionalization are "overtaking the standard unit of development" which traditionally was the nation-state or society. Thus, the "conventional agent of development, the state, is being overtaken by the role of international institutions and market forces" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001, p.1). It could be argued that the discourse of globalisation and, with it, the dominant role played in development activities worldwide by such influential global institutions as the World Bank[22] has contributed to the weakening role of the nation-state and, perhaps paradoxically, also to a heightened sense of parochialism and nationalism worldwide. In Solomon Islands, this could be said to be exemplified by the recent ethnic conflict between militants of Guadalcanal and Malaita, and also, perhaps, by the incessant call for greater political autonomy by some of the country's provincial governments, such as those of Rennell-Bellona, Makira/Ulawa and Temotu provinces. On the other hand, the Canadian philosopher, John Ralston Saul (1999)[23], who sees the Asian crisis of 1997 and 1998 as signalling the beginning of the end for the world economy, argues that it is not yet clear what will fill the vacuum left by faltering confidence in a globalisation agenda which has led to the normalisation of the dumping of underpriced goods into markets, thus destroying local structures. Whereas the globalist believes that the power of the nation state is waning, it may be that the nation state still has a significant role to play.

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[22] This includes the IMF, the Asian Development Bank, the WTO and United Nations.

[23] See also Fallow (2005).

In Solomon Islands, whatever the future of the nation-state may be, the fact remains that development activity and the state have been inextricably linked over the past three decades although the influence of other agencies such as non-government organisations have also been apparent. This state of affairs is in keeping with how Desai and Potter (2002, p.471) explain the functional relationship between the nation-state and development to date:

> Development activity was for long virtually the monopoly of the state. However, the lack of alternatives did not mean the state was always a positive force for development. Moreover, in the late twentieth century, the state's claim to this monopoly weakened, while other agencies of development such as the World Bank, the IMF and non-government organisations (NGOs), gained a higher profile. Development has to be seen in the economic context of global capitalism, but also in the political context. The most crucial relationship is between the state and the economy: states participate directly in processes of productive capital formation (establishing a set of economic policies favourable to capitalist accumulation), provide infrastructure and affect private-sector resource allocation through monetary and fiscal policies. The state provides an enabling environment/structure for development by other agencies. The state is the network of government, quasi-government and non-government institutions that co-ordinates, regulates and monitors economic and social activities. The role of non-state actors seems destined to grow as the power of the nation-state declines and global economic activity intensifies.

In the case of Solomon Islands, the nation-state, as a legitimate social and political entity, promoted the national development agenda, and discharged the implementation of this authority through national policy and planning. Even so, it

would be naïve to assume that the nation-state was the sole legitimate institution in Solomon Islands society. The institutions of state may have planned for development, but the process of implementation necessarily involved contending with both internal and external dynamics. Even so, it remains the case that the state continues to play a major role in social and economic development in Solomon Islands, something that must be accommodated in any description and analysis of development activities in Solomon Islands over the period in question. Nevertheless, it also needs to be acknowledged that the nation-state itself, like development, is a peculiarly European model of society. In fact, recognising that Solomon Islands as a nation state is a British colonial creation is an important factor in understanding the enduring and unresolved nature of state reform in Solomon Islands. Furthermore, as in the case of so many former European colonies, the role played by international institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations continues to have enormous influence on development activity and practice. Even so, although the nation-state can still be described as the main protagonist of mainstream development discourse and practice, it is very far from certain that this will continue to be the case even in the short term. Indeed, there are persistent calls for the state to relinquish some of its development responsibilities and for these to be undertaken by business entrepreneurs and the private sector (see for example, Holden & Holden (2005)).

3.6.2 Civil society and development

Civil society in general can be described as involving the realm of non-state actors or entities, whether these are religious or secular in nature. Such actors sometimes also include social movements. As Desai and Potter (2002, p. 471) observe, the role of non-state actors "seems destined to grow as the power of the nation-state

declines and global economic activity intensifies". Indeed, in their critique of mainstream development, Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar (1998) place considerable emphasis on the role and place of social movements and NGOs in general, seeing them as, in many cases, the 'good Samaritans' of the poor and 'have-nots' of society, those who have inevitably been left behind and are beyond the patronage of the nation-state and mainstream development activity. Escobar (2005, p. 349) is even more forthright:

> Perhaps social movements, as symbols of resistance to the dominant politics of knowledge and organisation of the world, provide some paths in the direction of this calling, that is, for the re-imagining of the 'Third World' and a post-development era.

In Solomon Islands, NGOs play an increasingly important role in development in society at large. However, apart from the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) - which is possibly the most visible of the local NGOs - many of the others originate from outside the country. This is linked to a range of practical and conceptual problems in relation to the possibility that development can, in the future, play a meaningful role in the lives of the majority of ordinary rural-dwelling Solomon Islanders.

So far as Solomon Islands is concerned, one of the issues that needs to be addressed is that of the positioning and role of civil society. Many of the civil society groups in Solomon Islands, whether church-based or otherwise, still operate from within the institutional framework of the nation-state, and within the state's prescribed political and legal jurisdictions, even though the acronym NGO presupposes a complete absence of the state. NGOs and civil society groups,

apart from the church, generally still do not enjoy the same level of legitimacy that is accorded to the state and to culture/*kastom*. Thus, given that they currently operate very much within the context of state, it is difficult to determine how effective they might be in promoting and providing development assistance to Solomon Islanders were the state's role to be reduced, especially in a context where rural villagers generally expect, in line with *kastom*, that NGOs will serve the interests of individuals, their immediate families and close relatives. NGOs and civil society generally, tend to gain their legitimacy, often as forces that question the state, in capitalist economic frameworks. As Edelman and Haugerud (2005, p. 2) note, their critique of mainstream development is often from the standpoint of "alternatives *in* rather than *to* development". However, the fact that the subsistence economy of Solomon Islands has not been fully replaced by a capitalist economy means that the position of NGOs is not as clear cut as it would otherwise be. The question of whether NGOs and civil society groups can, or will, assume greater significance in Solomon Islands, and whether they can, or will, be able to address development issues currently unresolved within Solomon Islands therefore remains an open one.

3.6.3   Social capital and development

In an internet article, Smith (2001, ¶ 1) notes that social capital has emerged as an important notion in contemporary society:

> The notion of social capital is a useful way of entering into debates about civil society – and it is central to the arguments of Robert Putnam and others who want to 'reclaim public life'. It is also now being used by the World Bank with regard to economic and societal development and by management experts as a way of thinking about organisational development.

Putnam's (2000) influential book, *Bowling Alone*, notes that social capital is primarily concerned with revitalising urban communities in the United States of America, with the attempt to counter societal breakdown and decay and bring about a greater measure of social cohesion. The World Bank takes the view that social capital is indispensable to social and economic development (World Bank, *PovertyNet*, 2006, ¶ 1):

> Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin society – it is the glue that holds them together.

From a development standpoint, the World Bank advocates a broad view of social capital, one that includes the social and political environments that shape societal structures and enable norms to develop. Thus, the concept of social capital extends beyond communities and community groups to include "the most formalised institutional relationships and structures, such as government, the political regime, the rule of law, the court system, and civil and political liberties" (World Bank, *PovertyNet*, 2006, ¶ 5). Although the concept of social capital is clearly relevant to Solomon Islands development, the precise nature of its role is less evident than it is in the case of the United States.

The World Bank's broad application of social capital not only ensures that the virtues and vices of social capital are taken into consideration, but also that the notion of social capital is located squarely within a nation-state-wide societal

framework. In this way, whilst the importance of forging relationships within and across communities is acknowledged, there is also a critical recognition that the capacity of various social groups to act in their own best interests depends crucially on the support, or otherwise, they receive from both the state and other private and public sector institutions. Such a formulation highlights also the critical relationship between the state, its constituent parts, and other sectors of society. Thus, social capital is seen as applying equally to the state as a whole and to social groupings in that the viability and durability of the state depends on social stability and widespread popular support (World Bank, *PovertyNet*, 2006, ¶ 5). When social cohesion breaks down at the group or community level, the stability and viability of the nation-state is also, in the longer term, under threat. The recent experience of Solomon Islands is a case in point.

From the point of view of the World Bank, economic and social development thrives when the state, through its institutions and representatives, works in tandem with the corporate sector and civil society groups, thus creating a favourable context for the creation of forums through which common goals can be identified and pursued (World Bank, *PovertyNet,* 2006, ¶ 5). From this perspective, the situation in Solomon Islands, one in which the state has been, over the past three decades, the dominant player in development activity is no longer the best option.

Smith (2001) (see discussion above) identified three dimensions of social capital. The first is the civil society or community application of social capital developed by Putnam (2000) and others. The second is the nation-state-wide application of

social capital developed by the World Bank (*PovertyNet*, 2006) for social and economic development. The third is the efficiency and sustainability of an organisation from a management point of view. This third dimension, although not discussed at any great length here, is nevertheless implicit in subsequent discussions (see, in particular, *Chapter 6* where the issue of state reform is discussed in the context of development in Solomon Islands). From an organisational point of view, social capital which "consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and commitments [makes] cooperative action possible" (Cohen & Prusak, 2001, p. 4).

Given the fact that there are a number of important contemporary stakeholders in development, it is important to identify those stakeholders which are most relevant to gaining an understanding of Solomon Islands context and are therefore critical to the formulation of appropriate development process for the future.

3.7   Implications for social and economic development in Solomon Islands

Edelman and Haugerud (2005, p. 2) note that much debate about development in the 20th and 21st centuries "explores whether all or most societies follow the same trajectory toward greater accumulation and well-being or, alternatively, whether wealth in some places or among certain social groups is causally related to poverty in other places or among other groups". They also note that the "notion of a single development trajectory implies that history, rather than reflecting the outcome of struggles between contending social groups – including at times very localised struggles – is simply a *deus ex machina*, in which culture and political processes play no role"(p. 2).

In view of the unresolved debate noted by Edelman and Haugerud (2005), the importance of contemporary stakeholders in determining what approaches to development will best serve Solomon Islands in the future is a complex matter, one that necessarily entails a comparative analysis of Solomon Islands context. In approaching this matter, I employ the metaphor of the 'island-space' conceptualisation explained in *Chapter 1*.

3.7.1 'Island-space' and the underlying dynamics of development in Solomon Islands

The concept of 'island-space' is intended, first and foremost, to stand in contrast to a 'continental-space' conceptualisation, the latter representing the European or Western geographical, historical and social context. The fact that modern and mainstream development discourse originated in a 'continental-space' already implies a disjuncture between the Solomon Islands context and that of Europe. From this follows the proposition that the concept of development in an 'island' context is not necessarily the same as that in a 'continental' context. Inevitably, the concept of development that emerged from a 'continental-space' (the West or Europe) must have a history and nuances that are different from the concept of development that is located within the context of an 'island-space'. In understanding and explaining development in Solomon Islands, it is logical, therefore, to begin with the notion that it is an 'island' society, one that leads to a focus on the significance of its geographical, historical and social context. However, although Solomon Islands can usefully be conceptualised as an 'island' society, it is also important to acknowledge that it is a pluralistic one (see *Chapter 1*). Thus, notions of development in one part of the country will not necessarily

be the same as those in another part of the country. It is therefore important to acknowledge that development will not only have general 'island' connotations, but also more specific contextual ones, something that remains the case notwithstanding the fact that Pacific Islanders and their close collaborators, such as Huffer and Qalo (2004), have observed a number of common traits in indigenous philosophies and social thought which can, I believe, be attributed to the island nature of the societies they discuss. The concept of development in the case of Ulawa Island is discussed further in *Chapter 6*.

The fact that the nation-state has been the major stakeholder in social and economic development in Solomon Islands to date, and the fact that there are other important stakeholders, such as, for example, the World Bank, NGOs and other civil society groups, means that the issue of their role in the future needs to be addressed. This is not, however, the primary concern of this research project, a project which focuses on 'island-based' conceptualisations of development and, in particular, those of rural Solomon Islanders in the hope that such conceptualisations will be taken more fully into account in future considerations of Solomon Islands development as a whole. The active involvement and participation of rural Solomon Islanders in development activity is critical. However, unless their conceptualisations of development are understood, there is little hope that their active participation can be secured. This simple premise underlines the discussion of *mwa'ora(nga)*, an Ulawa Island concept of development, and its implications for the wider issue of state reform in Solomon Islands (see *Chapter 6*).

3.8   Overview

Official definitions and descriptions of development in Solomon Islands are based on production and deficit models. My aim here is not primarily to challenge such conceptualisations. Rather, it is to supplement them, to deepen our understanding of development in Solomon Islands by articulating an indigenous and organic concept of development, one that takes account of the diversity of human experience, and one that is not easily reflected in government reports and official development statistics. *Chapter 4* provides the local context in an outline of contemporary Solomon Islands society; *Chapters 5* and *6* explore the notion of an indigenous, organic concept of development peculiar to Ulawa Island with reference to development activities over the past quarter of a century. In *Chapter 6*, these discussions are extended to include a proposal concerning state reform in Solomon Islands.

Chapter 4

Solomon Islands: A nation of '*wantoks*'

4.1 Introduction

In a seminar paper entitled *The husk, the nut, the lime & lif; Reflecting on Solomon Islands through `betel nut'*, I noted (Rohorua, 2002a) that contemporary Solomon Islands society could be described through the broad framework of the following metaphors: 'island' and 'betel nut'. However, critical also to the perspective adopted in this chapter is the notion of 'wantok', literally meaning in Pidgin English 'one talk' (someone with whom you share the same language). In the context of the diversity of Solomon Islands, 'wantok' has come to be used as a marker of social identity. It is, however, used in two different ways. Within Solomon Islands, it is commonly used by people of the same cultural and linguistic background to refer to one another. In this context, it is an identity marker referring to people from the same geographical area, region, island or even province. However, outside of Solomon Islands, Solomon Islanders use the word 'wantok' to greet one another or to refer to fellow Solomon Islanders generally or, indeed, to refer more widely to people from the Pidgin speaking Melanesian countries (including Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea). The word 'wantok' therefore serves an important purpose as a marker of collective identity. In this chapter and thesis, I conceive of wantok identity metaphorically in terms of a betel nut. The outer wrapping (the betel nut husk) is the state or Constitution, the inner core (the betel nut inner core) is *kastom*, the customs and practices of the people. Solomon Islanders often chew a mixture of betel nut, lime (made from

burnt coral), and areca leaf (commonly known as *lif*), the last two providing additional flavour. Here, the lime and the *lif* symbolise the role of the church. In seeking to understand Solomon Islanders, and, hence, Solomon Islander conceptions of, and responses to development, it is important to take account of the inner core (*kastom*), the husk (state/Constitution) and the lime and *lif* (the church), all of which are important aspects of *wantok* identity.

What is symbolised in these metaphors is something that is absent from the Solomon Islands 'story' that was passed on to generations of Solomon Islands school pupils in the past. As it was, attending primary school in the late 1960s and early 1970s, one was taught in social studies that the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendaña was the first person to discover Solomon Islands. He it was who named these Islands after the biblical King Solomon. The main thoroughfare of the central business district (CBD) of Solomon Islands capital, Honiara, is called *Mendana Avenue*. The premier hotel of the CBD is called *Mendana Hotel*. Honiara's CBD itself is often referred to also as Point Cruz after one of Mendaña's Spanish galleons. Certainly, then, there are many reminders of Mendaña in the Solomons.

However, from a critical point of view, Mendaña was by no means the first person to discover these islands. Soon after political independence, we began to teach our young people that Mendaña was certainly a first, the first foreign 'tourist'. The first people to discover these islands were, however, the indigenous peoples themselves. That this self-evident truth needed to be emphasised demonstrates the important role that naming can play in historical and political awareness. Naming

is, in fact, a critical aspect of that process of misrepresentation of history that has so often typified the process of colonisation.

To many people, 'Solomon Islands' is little more than a name attached to a group of islands on a map, a name associated with a green, blue and gold flag with five stars, with a National Anthem with sentimental lyrics (*God Bless Our Solomon Islands, From Shore to Shore*),[24] with a legal Constitution and a Coat of Arms featuring native creatures and symbols and bearing the slogan *To Lead Is To Serve*, and with its own Passport (a small green book stamped throughout with reminders that it is the property of Solomon Islands Government). That these islands are perceived as a totality, as a bounded entity, relates to the fact that they are identified by a single name and the fact that this name is now associated with a political entity, a nation state. Whether these islands can be said to represent a social entity is a rather different matter, one that is critical to our understanding of both the people who inhabit these islands and the political processes that have played a part in shaping their sense of identity. In seeking to clarify some aspects of contemporary Solomon Islands society below, I shall refer, on occasion, to the three metaphors: the island, the betel nut and the wantok.

4.2   Island geography and location

'Solomon Islands', as the name suggests, is an island country. From a geographical point of view, this implies both location and spatial orientation. In terms of location, the Solomon Islands lie in the wider South Pacific Islands or Oceania region, and sub-regionally in Melanesia. It is a tropical country, sharing

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[24]The national anthem of Solomon Islands was, in fact, composed by a Solomon Islands National, Panapasa Balekana, who had originally come from Fiji.

a number of important characteristics with the other South Pacific Island states or countries. From the point of view of development discourse, Oceania is made up of small, scattered, isolated communities with open economies which are vulnerable to the vagaries of global political and economic factors. However, as seen from the perspective of the conceptual framework introduced in *Chapter 1*, it is equally possible to think of Oceania as a large, open area, a 'Sea of Islands', a perspective that counters the largely negative views so often associated with mainstream development discourse (Hau'ofa, 1993a & b; 2000). It remains the case, however, that Oceania is made up not of continents, but of islands. This island status can be conceptualised in two ways: (a) in terms of a series of politico-social entities (each metaphorically an island) that are cut off from mainstream development and mainstream development discourse, and (b) in terms of Oceania itself, its series of islands constituting a single entity (metaphorically an island). Thus, the smallness, remoteness, and vulnerability of each of the politico-social 'islands' can be seen as being potentially offset by the fact that each of these 'islands' is part of a bigger 'island', potentially a formidable force but currently, like the smaller politico-social 'islands' from which it is constituted, lacking the necessary unity and the power to have any significant impact on the inequalities, the injustices and the disparagement that currently typify development and development discourse on the world stage. In this regard, with specific reference to Solomon Islands, Judith Bennett (1987, p. xix) maintains:

> Once the islands officially became a British possession, there was also a kind of inevitability about how the administration would finance itself, given the apparent abundance of land and labour. These developments were largely beyond the control of the fragmented peoples of the

Solomons, but soon involved them largely in the world economy. On such a wide stage they could play only the most insignificant role.

It could be said that the situation described by Bennett above remains as true today as it was when she made those remarks in 1987.

As a political entity, Solomon Islands is located between 5 and 13 degrees south longitude, and 155.5 and 170.5 degrees east latitude (Solomon Islands Curriculum Development Centre (SI CDC), 1990, p. 2). In the context of the South Pacific islands, it is one of the major island groups of Melanesia, larger than both Vanuatu and New Caledonia in terms of population and land mass, and, before independence, apart from Fiji, the largest of Britain's tropical dependencies in Oceania. The Solomon Islands group is a scattered island archipelago extending over 60,000 sq. km of sea and is oriented from the northwest to the southeast. It consists of six large, mountainous continental islands - 1,400 km from one extremity to the other and with a total land mass of 29, 785 sq km with hundreds of little islands and islets. The six major islands of the Solomons are Choiseul (also known as Lauru), New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal, Malaita and San Cristobal (also known as Makira). These six islands also constitute six of the nine provinces that make up the provincial government system in Solomon Islands. The major islands are largely volcanic in origin, although Ontong Java (or Lord Howe) in the north and Sikaiana (Stewart Island in the northeast) are both coral atolls, while Rennell Island (in the south), which is home to Lake Tenggano, is a raised coral atoll. Of the six major islands, Guadalcanal is the largest, with a total land area of approximately 5,650 sq km. It is also the site of the country's national capital, Honiara (see *Map 1*).

Map 1: **Map of Solomon Islands**
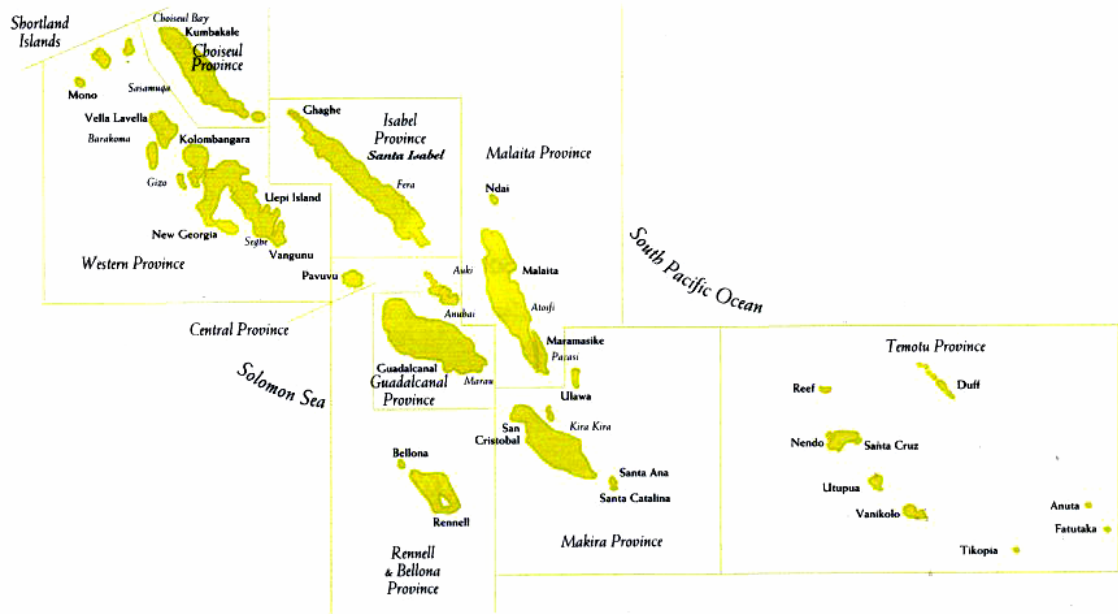
Solomon Islands is the second largest country in the South Pacific region in terms of total land mass (after Papua New Guinea) and is third overall in terms of population, with approximately 500,000 people (after both PNG, with approximately 5 million, and Fiji, with approximately 800,000 people). On the whole, the islands of the Solomons are well watered by rivers and streams and many of the islands are overlaid by marine sediments and fringed coral reefs surrounded by lagoons. Two of the famous lagoons in the Solomons are also featured in anthropological studies, Marovo Lagoon by Edvard Hviding (1996) and Langalanga Lagoon by Pei-yi Guo (2001). Langalanga lagoon, or rather the people of Langalanga, near Auki in Malaita, are famous in the Solomons for their shell-money and ship building industries. Marovo Lagoon, on the other hand, is world famous as it is also being considered as a possible World Heritage site by UNESCO.

4.3   Societal overview

The current political and socio-cultural structure of Solomon Islands is related to its historical evolution. Although Solomon Islands as an entity came into existence only under colonial rule, its roots are based on earlier migration and settlement patterns. In Melanesia generally, the indigenous foundation of contemporary society is widely known as *kastom*. The early migration and settlement of the indigenous people of the islands was followed in the 16th and 17th centuries by sporadic European contact. This contact took place initially through seafaring explorations, followed by trading expeditions and later intense missionary activity. In the case of Solomon Islands, that historical wave of European adventure and travel into the south seas led to the declaration of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (B.S.I.P.) which involved direct political and administrative control by Britain. Solomon Islands became, in terms of modern political discourse, a protectorate of the British Isles, formerly a British colony or outpost (for more detail, see for example, Bennett (1987); Laracy (1989)).

4.4   Early settlers

Linguistic and archaeological understanding of the pre-historic period of the islands now known as Solomon Islands is limited although it is generally believed that the central Solomons were occupied by hunters and gatherers about 10,000 years before the present (B.P.) and that these hunter gatherers were overrun by Neolithic peoples (who spoke a variety of languages belonging to the widely spread Oceania branch of the Austronesian language family) about 4,000 B.P. (Boutilier, 1981, p. 265). These newcomers, who must have had a high level of marine technology which enabled them to cross the open seas between the islands, appear to have been agriculturalists who planted taro and domesticated chickens,

dogs, and pigs. Archaeological fieldwork (Douglas & Douglas, 1994, p. 602) suggests that the islands' cultures enjoyed a remarkable degree of continuity over time (Rukia, 1989, pp. 3-13). In many important respects, contemporary Solomon Islands society reflects earlier patterns of indigenous society. For example, it is widely accepted that about 80% of contemporary Solomon Islanders continue to live in rural locations on the numerous islands of the Solomons. Wherever the ancestors of the present indigenous population of Solomon Islands originated, and whatever their reasons for migrating to these islands, these settlers and their descendants adapted over time to their new environment and developed their own *kastoms* before the arrival of European explorers.

4.5   European exploration

In terms of written historical records, the first Europeans to visit Solomon Islands were Spaniards who, under the command of Alvaro de Mendaña, set out from Peru in South America and landed on the east coast of Santa Isabel (Estrella Bay) in February 1568 (Boutilier, 1981, p. 265). Mendaña then sailed through the central Solomons, skirmished with the islanders in a desperate attempt to secure food, and eventually retired to Peru believing, however, that the islands were rich in gold. In fact, what was often mistaken for gold at the time was one of three minerals – pyrite, chalcopyrite or weathered biotite mica: " The discovery of the fool's gold, exaggerated by sailor's talk, led to the islands being officially described as the Isles of Solomon in 1574" (p. 265). In a second expedition to the 'Isles of Solomon' in 1595, Mendaña established a settlement at Graciosa Bay, on Santa Cruz, traditionally called Nendo. When he died, the remnants of the expedition departed for the Philippines although a small party of Spaniards did reach and settle in Makira. Later, however, other European explorers, including,

in 1643, the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman visited Solomon Islands. In the late eighteenth century, a number of European explorers also visited Solomon Islands. These included Philip Carteret (1767), Louis Bougainville (1768), Jean Surville, Comte de Laperouse (1788), Shortland (1788), and Sir Alexander John Ball (1792). It was, however, not until 1838 that a French navigator, Dumont d'Urville, confirmed that these were in fact the same islands that had been referred to by Mendaña as Islands of Solomon (Boutilier, 1981, p. 265).

These early European explorers had no immediate significant impact upon the lives of the islanders, although they did prepare the way for other European travellers and adventurers, some of whom recorded their impressions of life in these and other islands (see, for example, Charles Woodford (1890); R.H. Codrington (1891); Charles Fox (1924); Walter Ivens (1927); Cyril S. Belshaw (1945; 1954); Harold Scheffler (1965); Ian Hogbin (1969); and Judith Bennett (1987)). Boutilier (1981, p. 265) provides a brief description based on such sources:

> The Melanesian societies which the European explorers encountered were highly fragmented linguistically and geographically. Broadly speaking, the islanders were interior-dwelling, up-country, swidden agriculturalists (later known as 'bush people') or coastal-dwelling fisher folk (known as 'saltwater people'). In kinship terms, they might be matrilineal or patrilineal depending on the island or part of the island where they lived. Most of the Solomon Islanders lived in small villages or hamlets seldom exceeding two hundred people. Their wood carving, canoe making, and other crafts were highly developed and artistic. They indulged in fairly constant interclan warfare of a largely ritualistic, honour-readjusting variety on a small scale, though fairly large head-hunting raids did take

place in and from the New Georgia archipelago until early in the twentieth century. The islanders inhabited a world of ghosts, spirits, sorcery, and magic and many of their activities involved the propitiation of spirits or the enactment of appropriate rituals.

All of these characteristics, whether or not they would be universally recognised by more recent travellers, have had some influence on contemporary Solomon Islands society. Indeed, recent ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands between Guadalcanal and Malaitan ethnic militant groups reinforces some of these observations.

It is generally believed that Mendaña, motivated by ambition and self-interest, sought "the legendary Isles of Solomon, believed to lie west of South America and said to be visited by the Incas" and that he believed that he had discovered them (Douglas & Douglas, 1994, p. 602). From the earliest period of European exploration, therefore, these islands were associated with King Solomon of the Old Testament whose wealth and wisdom were thought to have originated in some mysterious place, the Isles of Solomon. This association had an immediate and lasting effect. European travellers continued to explore the islands, seeking that mythological island paradise, that distant place that would eventually reveal its treasures providing them with untold wealth and influence. When it failed to do so, Solomon Islands became the victim of a new and dangerous mythology. It came to be seen as the opposite of that mysterious place of wealth and wisdom sought so assiduously by European adventurers. It came to be associated with abject poverty and ignorance, and it is this mythology, as fanciful as the earlier one, that fed so readily into mainstream development discourse. In opposition to the wealth, the influence and the success of the European continent, the islands of

Oceania, including Solomon Islands, came to be seen in almost wholly negative terms, the islanders themselves being cast not as victims of European expansionism, but as lazy incompetents who consistently failed to take advantage of the opportunities that that expansionism was held to accord to them. It is this mythology that underlies my use of 'island' as a metaphor not for isolation, but for isolationism, for the wilful failure to exert themselves in the ways required for participating in that global economic success that was the dream of mainstream development thinking.

4.6   Whalers and traders

Contact between Europeans and Solomon Islanders was fleeting prior to 1870. However, following the early European explorers, traders (mainly to *beche-de-mer* fishers and sandalwood cutters) and whalers (who brought goods such as fishhooks, calico, and axes) began to visit these islands (Boutilier, 1981, p. 265). The lives of the Neolithic agriculturalists of the islands were dramatically transformed both by introduced diseases and by the iron implements brought by these visitors to the islands (Siikala, 1982). They were now able to clear the jungles, prepare gardens and wage war more efficiently than before. Furthermore, as Bennett (1987, p. xix) observes:

> Almost from initial contact [with Europeans] a dependency was created because Solomon Islanders wanted and soon needed Western goods. In the trading period this dependency did not imply any real loss of autonomy. However, when the continuing search for Western goods meant that some Islanders became a significant component of the Pacific labour pool, their incorporation into some colonial framework was virtually inevitable.

The initial encounters between Europeans and islanders were fraught with cultural misunderstanding which frequently led to murder and reprisals. However, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, thousands of Solomon Islanders (principally from Malaita) were recruited to work as labourers on the sugarcane estates in Queensland (see also, Corris (1973); Wawn (1973)) and the coconut plantations in Fiji, a process that gradually led to acculturation (Boutilier, 1981, pp. 265-266). In fact, the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC), one of the predominant Christian denominations in Solomon Islands today, was initially established in the sugar estates in Queensland, Australia. In this area, the work of Moore (1990; 1993) provides an indispensable backdrop.

4.7   Missionaries

European interest in Solomon Islands was minimal until the mid-19th century when missionaries began to take an interest in the islands.[25] The first real missionary attempt at Christianising the islanders involved a number of priests and lay brothers of the French Marist[26] order who, under the direction of Bishop Jean-Baptiste Epalle, landed on the south coast of San Cristobal in December 1845. From Makira, they went on to Thousand Ships Bay in Santa Isabel. Although Bishop Epalle was killed within only a few days of arrival in Santa Isabel, the remaining Marist Fathers returned to Makira. There, following the

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[25] Much of the later missionary activity in the Solomons was via Australia (there was a British settlement in Sydney from 1788). However, Leslie Fugui (1989, p. 84) notes that the "first clergymen to visit Solomon Islands were two Catholic priests of the Franciscan order who came with the Spanish explorer Mendana". They celebrated mass at Santa Isabel on 9th February 1568. A second Spanish expedition (1595) also carried priests, although the missionaries had little impact on Solomon Islanders at that time.

[26] These missionaries were Frenchmen, unlike the earlier Spanish clergy who had merely accompanied Spanish explorers, and were members of the Society of Mary.

murder of three other members of the order and the death from malaria of another, the effort was abandoned (Douglas & Douglas, 1994, p. 604).[27]   Missionary activity then remained dormant until later in the nineteenth century. The later missionary visits included Anglicans (1852), Roman Catholics (1898), Methodists (1902), the South Sea Evangelical Mission (now the South Sea Evangelical Church) (1904), and Seventh-Day Adventists (1914).   These missionaries encouraged the movement of people from the bush to the coast, modified traditional cultures and customs, and further divided Solomon Islands society by adding a religious dimension, and also, importantly, provided all formal education and most of the health services prior to World War II (Boutilier, 1981, pp. 265-6).

The impact of missionary activity is evident in the fact that 95 % of Solomon Islanders are now professing Christians. This phenomenon is critical within the context of this thesis. The significant thing is that, despite their differences, the missionaries were generally imbued with the firm belief that their role was to change peoples' lives for the better. This paternalistic outlook informed both their institutions and their practices. Indeed, one could argue that missionary activity may be partly responsible for the 'dependency mentality' that has so often been commented on in relation to Pacific Islanders.   In this regard, the colonial government may have merely perpetuated an attitude that originated with missionary activity in the Pacific (Nabalarua, 1998).

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[27] Dr Charles Fox (1924), who studied Makira from an anthropological perspective, claimed that cannibalism was practised on the island but there is nothing to show that any of the three murdered missionaries may have ended up in someone's (earth) oven.

4.8   Colonial history and political independence

4.8.1   Colonization: British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP)

The declaration of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP) was a colonial move by Britain to thwart the French who were already in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) next door. This was merely part of the global process of empire building begun by the British in parts of Africa and Asia. From this perspective, the formation of a Solomon Islands society was the result of direct intervention by a foreign country in another society. The administrative intervention and initiative by Britain was greatly assisted by the work of missionaries, but the basic fact remains that Solomon Islands was `born' out of foreign interests, intervention and design.

One other critical activity that was to bring another important dimension to Solomon Islanders lives was labour recruitment or `blackbirding'. In the 1870s, when missionary activity was just beginning to make inroads into Solomon Islands society, labour recruiters also arrived in the islands seeking labour for the plantations in Fiji, Queensland, and occasionally New Caledonia and Samoa. Records estimate that some 19,000 Islanders altogether were taken to Queensland and more than 10,000 to Fiji (Douglas & Douglas, 1994, p. 605). Abuses committed by labour recruiters, also known as `blackbirders', frequently led to the murder of innocent people, particularly in the early days. Two prominent Europeans lost their lives because of this practice. One was Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, second Bishop of Melanesia, clubbed to death at Nukapu Reef Islands in 1871; the other was Commodore Goodenough of HMS *Pearl* who died from a poison arrow wound sustained in Carlisle Bay, Santa Cruz, in 1875. It was

partly the deaths of these prominent individuals (as well as the 'evils' of the labour trade more generally – see Clive Moore (1990) and (1993)) that prompted Britain to declare a protectorate over the southern Solomon Islands (Guadalcanal, Savo, Malaita, San Cristobal and New Georgia) in 1893. Later additions were made over the years and by 1900 the rest of Solomon Islands had become what was then called a British Solomon Islands Protectorate (B.S.I.P).

When a British protectorate was established, there were approximately four dozen European traders resident in the islands. Twelve years later, in 1905, there was a move to open up the country commercially. The British Government invited private businesses to invest in the new territory and the managers and officials of *Levers Pacific Plantation Ltd.* visited the protectorate. They liked what they saw and immediately acquired land on a large scale. Coconut plantations began almost immediately and by 1940 the company had more than 8000 hectares under cultivation. Two other companies acquired interest in the Solomons in the early 20th Century: *Burns Philp & Co. Ltd* of Sydney, and the *Malayta Company*. The latter sold out to *W.R. Carpenter & Co. Ltd* in the 1930s. On the whole, however, economic development of Solomon Islands progressed sluggishly before World War II. Overseas companies were initially engaged only in plantation development, largely involving coconuts for copra exports. This concentration on plantation agriculture led to an uneven distribution of development activity and employment opportunity (which were concentrated in certain areas, and on some islands, especially those with good natural harbours where ships could easily collect the copra). The corollary of plantation development was head tax which was imposed on locals by the colonial government. This forced people, especially

young men, to move from their villages to other islands to find work to pay for the head tax. In this way, cheap labour for the plantation was ensured. The beginnings of uneven and distorted development in Solomon Islands were, therefore, already in evidence. As Bennett (1987) has noted, what we see here is the beginning of the erosion of the autonomy and independence of indigenous Solomon Islanders.

One can only speculate on what might have happened in Solomon Islands, or the world generally for that matter, had the Second World War not happened. As it was, most of the planters and traders in the Solomons group were evacuated to Australia after the Japanese entered the war in 1942. Solomon Islands played a crucial role in World War II, the major turning point of the Pacific campaign being a fiercely fought battle between the allied forces and the Japanese Imperial navy off Savo Island, near Guadalcanal, in August 1942. Indeed, from May 1942, when the Battle of the Coral Sea was fought, until December 1943, the Solomons were almost constantly a scene of battle. Eventually, in February 1943, the Japanese army withdrew from Guadalcanal. By December 1943, the allied forces were in command of the northern Solomons.

When civil administration resumed, the British authorities found that Tulagi, the former capital, an islet off Ngella/Florida Islands, had been destroyed completely during the war. It was therefore decided to relocate the capital to Honiara on the north coast of Guadalcanal where it is today. This was the site of an important campaign against the Japanese during the war and an important US military base. Moreover, the site was only 16km west of Henderson Field (now the Solomon

Islands international airport), a major wartime air field, built by the Japanese but named by the Americans after one of their own fighter pilots who had died in the Guadalcanal campaign. Point Cruz, the major port area in Honiara today, is also said to be the place where Mendaña and his ships anchored during their first visit to the Solomons, and Holy Cross, where the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Honiara now sits at the top of a small hill, is where Mendaña and his men are said to have placed a cross in honour of the Spanish monarch and of their own achievement.

4.8.2 Maasina Ruru

After the war, especially between 1946 and 1950, a good deal of official attention was devoted to a native movement known as *Maasina ruru* (Marching Rule) (see also for more detail, Keesing (1978; 1982; 1992) and Laracy (1983)). Begun in Malaita, this movement spread to some of the nearby islands, including Ulawa Island. *Maasina ruru* was an entirely indigenous protest movement against colonial rule although it was imbued with a religious cargo-cult (Worsley, 1968) orientation. Detecting its anti-British or colonial ideals, the administration had many of the leaders gaoled in late 1948, crushing a sullen defiance of government authority and weakening considerably the movement itself. This protest movement was at the forefront of British administration thinking when the decision to grant independence to Solomon Islands was taken. There were other indigenous protest movements, including one that centred on the followers of Silas Eto (Holy Mana) who broke away from the Methodist Church to form the Christian Fellowship Church in 1959-60. This breakaway movement was, it has been suggested, as much a symbolic rejection of colonial rule as was the *Maasina ruru* movement. On Guadalcanal, another notable protest movement was the *Moro movement* which centred on Makaruka, located on the southern part or

weather coast of Guadalcanal (Davenport & Coker, 1967). Moro's followers were dissatisfied with colonial rule during the 1960s and wanted to return to the old ways of custom and self-sufficiency. Another Guadalcanal-based protest movement was the *Custom Company* referred to as also as 'The Society for the Development of native Races-western Guadalcanal' and led by Matthew Belamatanga (Bennett, 1987).

What these protest movements demonstrated was a dislike for, and rejection of, British colonial rule. The war had taught the locals some important lessons. The American soldiers, in the experience of the Solomon Islanders, did not discriminate in the way that the British colonial administrators did. Solomon Islanders who helped out in the war effort as coast-watchers or carriers observed that black soldiers fought alongside their fellow white Americans against the Japanese. Even long after the end of the war, Americans were viewed favourably amongst Solomon Islanders. The British colonial administrators, on the other hand, were perceived very poorly by the islanders, one significant aspect of this being the willingness with which they accepted evacuation to Australia during the war. During times of peace, the British administrators often adopted an aggressive stance towards Solomon Islanders; at the outset of war, however, they fled (see for example, Gina (2003), especially *Chapter 8*, pp. 159-184).

In response to local protest, and having been weakened considerably by World War II, Britain began to make changes in the system of government, changes that were evident from the end of the war through to the early 1970s. After that, Britain moved rapidly towards granting political independence. Thus, for

example, when civil administration resumed after the war, an advisory council, originally established in 1921, was re-established. In 1960, however, that advisory council was replaced by a legislative council and an executive council. In 1970, under a new constitution, a new single government council replaced both the legislative council and the executive council. The new single government council sat for the first time in July 1971. In April 1974, a new constitution was adopted. In mid-1975, the name Solomon Islands was officially adopted in place of British Solomon Islands Protectorate. On 2 January 1976, Solomon Islands became an internally self-governing state. Political independence followed on 7th July 1978. Initially, the transition from colonial rule to political independence was relatively peaceful, although the abrupt departure of the British, together with inadequate preparation for independence, helped to create the circumstances that led to the upheavals of 1998 and the ethnic conflict of 1998–2003. These events are critical to an understanding of social and economic development in Solomon Islands after independence (see *Chapter 5*). Sam Alasia (1997, pp. 3-4) sums up some of these apparent contradictions as follows:

> From 1893 to 1945, the colonial administration did nothing to encourage Solomon Islanders to participate in the affairs of the country. Generally, Solomon Islanders were relegated to being passive subjects of colonial rule. Their opinions were not sought and their wishes ignored. They were subject to a government not responsive to their wishes. In addition, the colonial government laid the basis for a centralised government and it did so at the cost of ignoring, and in some instances challenging, traditional leadership systems by appointing headmen from amongst those sympathetic to their . . . cause, rather than those held in high regard by the communities involved. . . . This gave rise to the emergence of a new group of leaders who were often not recognised in the traditional context and, in

cases, did not have the support of the entire community. . . . [Thus the] manner in which the colonial administration carried out its affairs led to the displacement of Solomon Islanders from the political process – they were not participants, but rather, passive subjects answering to the needs and demands of the colonial institution.

Alasia (1997, p. 4) insisted that such deliberate disregard for, and mistreatment of, Solomon Islanders by the British colonial administration "caused many Solomon Islanders to resent the government and rebel against its authority".

4.8.3 *Kastom*

In this thesis, I use the word *kastom* rather differently from the more specific sense in which it is used by Akin (see for example, (2005)). I use it simply in the sense of 'culture' and/or 'tradition' rather than as a signal of cultural opposition to central authority and control (Akin, 2005, p.76), a sense in which it would also have been possible to use the term. It is this more general sense of *kastom* I have in mind in proposing an essentially tripartite explication of contemporary Solomon Islands society in terms of *kastom*, church and state/government. In Ulawa, this general understanding of *kastom* would be translated as *tolaha* (way) or *tolaha-ka* (way-our), as opposed to say, *tolaha-ni-haka* (way-of-ship, i.e. European way).

It is important, however, to bear in mind another approach to the conceptualisation of *kastom*. Many anthropologists, in discussing *kastom*, draw attention to the fact that it can represent a more or less conscious ideology of opposition. This understanding of *kastom* is not restricted to the Solomon Islands. It is used with reference to Melanesia more generally (see for example, Burt, 1982; Jolly 1982; Keesing, 1982 a & b; 1992; Larcom, 1982; Lindstrom, 1982;

Tonkinson, 1982, a & b). Although "there is significant variation in how Solomon Islanders . . . conceive of *kastom*", and consequently how government officials feel they can evoke it in different contexts, "it is Malaitans who have most developed and deployed *kastom* as a potent political ideology, and who have mounted the most effective challenges to government power" (Akin, 2005, p.80). Indeed, "Malaitans have for 60 years been much the dominant force in the political history of *kastom* in the Solomons, and they have been key players in events surrounding the recent chaos that has crippled the government" (p. 75).

Akin notes that "[governments] of the Solomon Islands have lagged behind other Melanesian states such as Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea in the cultivation of *kastom* as an ideological tool" (Akin, 2005, p.76). Although he notes that there are "many reasons why *kastom* has remained an ineffective political resource for most Solomon elites"[28], Akin does not explore these reasons in any detail, observing that "examination of complexities specific to *kastom* and different elites must wait another venue" (Akin, 2005, p.76). He does, however, note that successive Solomon Islands governments have recognised that promoting *kastom* too strongly might "strengthen the position of local kastom authorities and provide them with additional ideological weapons", adding that "[this] has made them wary of an idea that they cannot control" (p. 80).

In the Solomon Islands, as in other areas of the Pacific, *kastom* has important social, historical and political dimensions. It involves "social and community

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[28] David Akin (2005, p.76) notes that "analysis of this subject must distinguish between the `state' and `elites' – although they obviously share important characteristics and people, they are not synonymous, particularly vis-à-vis *kastom*".

ideals and perceived threats to them", especially threats to community autonomy (Akin, 2005, p.76). Thus, in Malaita in particular, there has been long and active resistance to threats to autonomy which have involved "[rallying] around the flag of *kastom*" (p. 76). So for many Solomon Islanders, Malaitans in particular, *kastom* is often associated with an ideology of resistance. It emerged in the form of resistance to the British colonial government after the World War 2. Later, during and after independence, it continued to be a powerful political symbol (Keesing, 1982, p. 297) which was, for example, associated with the Kwaio Fadanga of Malaita (pp. 363-366).

As indicated in the preceding discussion, *kastom* has a range of possible interpretations. It can be interpreted in a general cultural sense as involving those contemporary beliefs and practices that have arisen out of, and are related to, traditional pre-contact beliefs and practices or it can be interpreted in an essentially political sense as involving culturally-centred opposition to authority (including opposition to colonial and post-colonial governments). It is in the first of these senses that the term is used in this thesis.

So a more nuanced reading of *kastom* other than the way I have used it in the thesis entails a form of ideology that seeks to consciously protect, preserve even, the autonomy of indigenous societies from outside forces and influences. In this manner *kastom* is a politically charged concept. Which thus begs the question; in the absence of the colonial government, how does one reconcile *kastom* with the contemporary system of government in the Solomon Islands? This is an issue I take up later (in *Chapter 6*).

4.8.4   Solomon Islands independence

4.8.4.1 Post-World War II

Solomon Islands as a sovereign and political entity is essentially a post-World War II phenomenon. It is important, in attempting to understand exactly how and why Solomon Islands gained political independence, to locate Solomon Islands in the global context of World War II. Following the war, Britain was involved in major reconstruction at home. In that context, Solomon Islands, a distant outpost like other Pacific colonies, was one whose infrastructure (limited as it was) had been subjected to extensive damage during the war. Furthermore, the war had had a huge impact on the attitudes and perceptions of indigenous Solomon Islanders in relation to the British colonial administrators. Formal protest combined with anti-colonial movements of various kinds had become commonplace. All of this indicated to the British that they could no longer take their colonial rule over the islanders for granted.

4.8.4.2   Decolonisation in the 1960s and 70s

Decolonisation of what came to be known as Third World countries became a world-wide process in the 1960s and 1970s. In the case of Solomon Islands, neither issues relating to society generally, nor issues relating specifically to development had been clearly articulated at the point of independence. Anti-colonial rhetoric characterised the development agenda. This anti-colonial rhetoric, often accompanied by other ideologies such as 'nation-building' and 'social and economic development', seems to have had a significant impact on national development policy and planning, the underlying assumption being that if government took care of the polity and the economy, the rest of society,

particularly in the social and cultural domains, would be able to take care of itself (see *Chapter 5*).

4.9   Solomon Islands modernity

By world standards, Solomon Islands is a relatively young nation which has not yet had time to put in place the institutions and practices that are required to establish and sustain stability. It is, furthermore, a nation which is the outcome of global and historical processes of European imperialism and colonialism. It is only when these two things are clearly understood that the nature of contemporary Solomon Islands society can be appreciated.

For any society, the past is both a point of reference and of departure; it is the source of a sense of origin and of identity and belonging; it is fundamental to positioning. In other words, the past defines the present and the present in turn defines the future. Memory and remembering play an important part in that sense of movement, action and continuity that characterises human societies.   In Oceania, traditional cultures encode recollections of the past in song, dance, art and craft, naming and story-telling, all of which contribute to their histories as do, for example, historical documents, such as, in the case of Solomon Islands, the Constitution.

The Solomon Islands Constitution represents a political definition of Solomon Islands rather than a social or cultural one. To understand Solomon Islands, it is necessary to understand its diversity, the variety of its peoples, its lands and its customs. This variety is not evident when the 'nation' is constitutionally (read politically) defined in terms of institutional structures, powers and procedures.

Nor is *Kastom*, the traditional practices that inform the lives of the people, evident in the apparently uniform legal system. Underlying the appearance of uniformity that accompanies nationhood is the diversity that is evidenced in the different languages, ethnicities and cultural practices of the peoples.

The point here is that Solomon Islands society, as defined constitutionally, is a recent development, the imposition of an externally defined unity. The indigenous people of the islands that now constitute a single political entity had no choice but to accede to the principles which underpin the Constitution and Constitutional Law. Thus, although political independence was generally peaceful in the initial stages, it was not without controversy. In Gizo, a protest led by Peter Salaka of the Short Islands and other prominent individuals from the western Solomons during independence day, called for the Western part of the Solomons nearest to Bougainville and PNG to secede from the rest of the country (see Gina (2003), especially Chapter 9, pp. 187-99). In fact, as Kabutaulaka (1999) has observed, the people of Guadalcanal also resisted, calling for a federal system of government at the time of independence.

Written Constitutions, including that of Solomon Islands, are products of their own times and places and are underpinned by the values and principles of those to whose tradition they belong. They do not necessarily sit comfortably with the values and attitudes of traditional societies where '*kastom*' is a significant factor in the daily lives of the people. Issues relating to development and reform in the Solomons cannot be fully understood unless this is taken into account.

Tarcisus Kabutaulaka, an academic from Guadalcanal, has argued that the underlying causes of the ethnic conflict in the Solomons relate, in large measure, to three major factors: land, disrespect and social issues/unemployment (Kabutaulaka, 1999). These are the types of issue that inevitably occupy every rural community in Solomon Islands today. What this suggests is that ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands is really a '*kastom* row' played out in a modern setting and amplified by the media. However, Andrew Nori (2002), a lawyer from Malaita, argues that changing the system of government from a provincial to a federal one will not necessarily address the development issues which are said to have contributed to the ethnic conflict. He argues that much of what can be done, what needs to be done to ensure that development activities impact positively on rural communities, is already embodied within existing laws, in particular the *Provincial Government Act 1981* (amended, repealed and reinstated up to *1997*). Even so, the national government under the leadership of Sir Allan Kemakeza was keen to press on with plans to change to a federal system, believing that this is what the majority of Solomon Islanders want (John Tuhaika, n.d.). It is in this context that the issue of state reform is discussed in *Chapter 6*.

Overall, whilst the Government and other interested parties have tried to work within the framework of the Constitution, the militants (both Isatabu Freedom Movement and Malaita Eagle Force) have appeared to be operating within the framework of the differing `*kastoms*' of Guadalcanal and Malaita. In this sense, recent ethnic conflict can be seen as part of a 'crisis of legitimacy', one that is underpinned by the belief of the people of Guadalcanal and Malaita that their own particular *kastom*-based ideologies should be reflected in the Constitution. In that

the legitimacy of existing state and national institutional structures is under scrutiny, so also is the present form of governance, including the national development policy and planning practices.

Currently, RAMSI appears to be effective in restoring law and order and in assisting in ensuring economic recovery in Solomon Islands. However, if RAMSI's work is to be consolidated in the longer term, the issue of the underlying conflict between Constitutional law and *kastom* needs to be adequately addressed (see also John Naitoro (2000)).[29]

Kastom is based on values and principles that play an important part in the lives of ordinary people in the Solomons.[30] Thus, for example, although the rationale underlying each relates to some concept of justice, Constitutional Law, with its emphasis on corrective institutions and custodial practices, adopts a clinical approach based on rehabilitation, whereas *kastom*, with its emphasis on compensation processes, embodies the concept of restitution, involving mending or restoring social and cultural/kin relationships. For Solomon Islanders, the issue of whether one form of justice - rehabilitation or socially-based restitution – is more legitimate than the other is a critical one, particularly as there are those whose personal interests are best served by exploiting the apparent lacunae

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[29] This point is reinforced by the outbreak of violence that accompanied the April 2006 election of the Prime Minister.

[30] I remember, in particular, being told about a woman from an Island in the Solomons who continually referred to her three young daughters as potential 'stoa' (literally, store or shop). That is, she was anticipating the future when her daughters would fetch a handsome `bride-price' .This sort of anecdotal evidence indicates the significance of *kastom*.

between the two. If not attended to, this issue may have serious implications for the future of Solomon Islands society, post-RAMSI.

The fact that the ideals of the Constitution may be foreign to traditional ways of thinking and behaving does not mean that Solomon Islanders will not adapt themselves to the values and principles that underlie the legal constitution. However, they are much less likely to do so if the *kastoms* that are familiar to rural dwellers in particular are not taken into account. Thus, for example, although many of the alleged offenders have been apprehended by the police and have served time in prison (Constitutional Law), Guadalcanal Islanders maintain that the murder of some of their kinsfolk by Malaitans in the recent past has not been compensated (*Kastom*). This is a classic example of the apparent contradiction between Constitutional Law and *kastom* in Solomon Islands (Nori, 2001), one that needs to be addressed urgently by Solomon Islands legal practitioners and custodians.

The betel nut metaphor introduced earlier has underpinned the overview of Solomon Islands society provided thus far. The betel nut husk (state/ Constitution) and inner core (kastom) have been introduced. What remains to introduce is the *lime* and *lif* (the role of the Church).

Bishop Terry Brown (2003, ¶ 3) has observed that:

> The three institutions of Solomon Islands life are the traditional culture ('custom'), the church and the civil state, listing them in the order in which

they reached the Solomons. Over the past century, the first two have been strong, the third weak. This is still the case.

In the context of what could be seen as a crisis of legitimacy, the role of the Church needs to be considered. In this context, it is important to note that approximately 90% of Solomon Islanders profess to be Christian. The Church, therefore, can and does play a significant role in peoples' perceptions of, and attitudes towards, Constitutional law and *'kastom'*/traditional practices. It is the third critical component of the social and political brew.

4.10   Contemporary Solomon Islands: A society of *'wantoks'*

As indicated in *4.1*, the word 'wantok' can be used in a variety of different ways. Although it can be used to signal a type of collective identity or national consciousness, it can also be used with reference to those clan-based family groupings which characterise traditional islands society.

These different uses of the word 'wantok' sum up differing perspectives on contemporary Solomon Islands society. Although most contemporary Solomon Islanders come from island and clan-based family groupings, many do not. For example, there are the i-Kiribati who came to Solomon Islands before independence from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (now Kiribati and Tuvalu respectively); there are the descendants of Hong Kong Chinese who have made Solomon Islands their home; there are, residing mainly in urban areas (especially Honiara), peoples from other areas of the Pacific. This diversity is evident in the previous national parliament of (December 2001 – March 2006): the Minister of Finance had a New Zealand background; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a local businessman, was the son of a wealthy Hong Kong Chinese merchant trader; the

sitting member of parliament for West Honiara, also a wealthy local businessman, came initially from Japan.

The various uses of the word 'wantok' provide a metaphoric framework in which issues of national identity and consciousness can be addressed. The metaphor of the betel nut provides a context for the discussion of complex issues of the interaction between State, *kastom* and Church. The island metaphor provides a context for the discussion of the relevance, or otherwise, of mainstream development discourse. Taken together, these three metaphors inform the discussion of development and state reform in Solomon Islands. Running through this discussion is the concept and practice of reciprocity, a concept and practice that has significant implications for Solomon Islands generally (Bennett, 1987), and for issues associated with development in particular.

Chapter 5

National development policy and planning

5.1 Introduction

In a general sense, national development policy and planning is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon (Todaro, 2000) which is conceived of in terms of progress, as a means-to-an-end - part of that wider understanding of societal change that involves technical and bureaucratic processes of social engineering (Bendix, 1962; Weber, 1976). This conception is underpinned by European/ Western social thought as inherited from the Enlightenment, a critical aspect of which is its theoretical conception as the manifestation of Reason (see *Chapter 3)*. National development policy and planning therefore encapsulate the historical experience of the Occident (as opposed to that of the Orient). It is an expression of that confidence in human rationality that led Karl Marx (1950; 1970) to object that philosophers have merely interpreted social reality, the real challenge and imperative being to change it, the implication being that it can be changed for the better. In this sense, national development policy and planning in Solomon Islands can be seen as a bureaucratic process with important political dimensions.

5.2 Development planning in the South Pacific

The South Pacific Islands region has a very particular economic and geographical nature. It is made up of small and scattered tropical islands which are characterised by highly open mixed economies, largely involving the production of primary commodities. The private sector, conceived of as the engine of economic growth, is generally treated as being 'sacred', the result being that

governments generally plan only for the public sector, any intervention in the private sector being largely restricted to the indication of priority areas and the offering of investment incentives in line with national development policy objectives. There is, in addition, a pragmatic awareness that the particular characteristics of the region are such that development plans can be seen as broad guidelines to assist in a movement towards development and modernisation rather than as "rigid blueprints for modernization" (Chand, 1984, p. 764).

Chand (1984, p. 765) has argued that there are three different, but not entirely dissimilar, approaches to national development planning in the South Pacific Islands, all of which are underpinned by the rationale of economic growth. Most countries begin with a "capital development budget" approach; some adopt an "integrated public investment programme" approach; others adopt a "comprehensive planning" approach, generally involving complex mathematical models and the establishment of "a set of clear objectives and relatively precise targets" for from three to five years, and allocating resources in line with specific targets which are generally determined by the government of the day. According to Chand, most countries in the South Pacific, apart from Solomon Islands, had adopted a comprehensive planning approach by the early 1980s. The fact that Solomon Islands was an exception to this suggests that political factors may have been more significant than pragmatic ones (see the following discussion).

According to Chand (1984, p. 768), national development planning involves "a combination of top-down and bottom-up procedures" and five sequential stages: identification of national objectives; definition of the overall development

strategy; creation of development plans and their translation into a series of programmes; implementation of the plans; and monitoring and evaluation. In Solomon Islands, the political imperatives, together with the fact that the public service sector operates at the behest of whatever politicians are in power, ensures that national development policy and planning is a highly centralised, bureaucratic activity.

The political and bureaucratic nature of national development policy and planning in Solomon Islands is clarified in the following discussion which begins with a consideration of development thinking and practice under British rule and goes on to consider the impact of political independence.

5.3   Development planning: British Solomon Islands Protectorate

As in the case of Fiji, Solomon Islands, as a former British colony or protectorate, was subject to "the introduction by the United Kingdom of the Commonwealth Development and Welfare Grant Scheme under which British colonies were required to submit development plans in order to qualify for financial aid" (Government of Fiji, Fiji's Sixth Development Plan, 1971-75, Suva, 1970). Thus, the initial move towards development planning was a colonial government initiative.

Before the country gained political independence, the British produced at least six development plans in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. Of these, I have been able to locate only the last two - *DP5* and *DP6*. These are dated 1968 – 70 (*DPS 5*) and 1971 – 73 (DPS 6), suggesting a three yearly planning cycle (with the initial plan almost certainly having been introduced in the 1950s). The *Fifth*

Development Plan 1968-1970 provides a glimpse of the motivation for the preceding two (*DPS 5,* p. 1):

> 2. The objective of the Fifth Development Plan remains as for the Third and Fourth Development Plans:-
>> "To develop the national and human resources of the Protectorate with the object of strengthening the economy to enable the standards of living in all sectors of the community to be raised."

Thus, development planning was conceived of as a government responsibility that involved ensuring that the country's human and natural resources were developed in such a way as to help build up the economy in order to raise the standard of living of the islanders. What this brief statement reveals is that the colonial government had definite views about (a) the need for development and (b) the purpose of that development – to raise the standard of living. Inevitably, this conception of development was based on British experience and had a clear political dimension.

This *Fifth Development Plan* is a clear example of a 'capital development budget' approach (see *section 5.2* above). In retrospect, such an approach to development planning can be seen as a consequence of the need to rebuild the economy of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate following World War II which ended just a few years earlier, in 1945. Indeed, a document produced in June 1965 - *The Development of the Economy of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate* - clearly indicates the development planning philosophy of the times. It incorporates a number of conclusions, including two "particularly necessary" things for the "future economic development of the Solomon Islands": "greater knowledge of

the territory's potentialities" and a "comprehensive view of its economic structure" (p. 35).

Before reaching those conclusions, the authors of this Report note that the "economic structure of the British Solomon Islands is determined . . . by its geographical layout" which was seen as having critical economic implications for development planning (p. 1):

> From an economic point of view . . . the group consists of a large number of separate units of production, most of which are separated by long over water distances; and moreover, while so far as their external trade is concerned the relative importance of the islands varies considerably (and not necessarily in accordance with the size of their populations) no one of them has a dominating position compared with the others.

It was evident to the authors of this Report that this plantation-based economy was predisposed to uneven development: only those islands deemed suitable for coconut plantations would have their own unit of production. Contextual realities of this kind were to have a considerable impact on development thinking at the time of political independence.

The June 1965 Report records the main exports from the British Solomon Islands Protectorate for the period 1958-1964. Although copra was the major export, there were other export commodities (such as trochus shells, timber and cocoa) whose volume was considered insufficient to justify quantification (p. 3):

Table 5.1: **Main Exports – 1958-1964 (%)**[31]

Commodity	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964
Copra	95.7	90.1	87.2	88.8	91.5	91.5	88.3

The figures for trochus shell, timber and cocoa, while undoubtedly important, were not available with enough consistency to make longitudinal comparisons.

What the above figures clearly demonstrate is that the economy of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate was essentially a plantation economy based on a single export commodity, copra. It is therefore not surprising that the colony had to rely heavily on foreign aid in order to finance its development plans. Nor is it surprising that multinational companies took the opportunity of investing in Solomon Islands plantations.

The colonial government hoped to address the issue of lack of economic diversity, Therefore, one of the 'particularly necessary' things the report highlighted was the need for "greater knowledge of the territory's potentialities" in relation to soil characteristics and the possibility of growing crops that would be suitable for export. The second 'particularly necessary' thing was gaining a "comprehensive view of [the] economic structure [of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate]", with particular emphasis on the problems associated with the scattered nature of the islands and the difficulties of communicating and transporting goods both within and beyond the islands (p. 35). These difficulties were compounded by disparities among the different islands in terms of population density and in terms

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[31] Source: *The development of the economy of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate* – June 1965

of "their degree of participation in an exchange [capitalist/market] economy" (p.35).

Solomon Islands became a British protectorate in 1893. The fact that it clearly had little idea of the development potentialities of that protectorate in 1965 (seventy years later) indicates an astonishing degree of complacency and neglect. In fact, following the Second World War, especially during the late 1940s and 1950s, active local protest movements against the colonial administration emerged in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (see *Chapter 4*) and British attempts at development planning and administrative and political reform should be seen in this context. To some extent at least, the British development efforts represented little more than an attempt to appease Solomon Islanders. In such a context, the argument that Britain did not prepare Solomon Islands adequately for political independence seems unavoidable. In fact, British interest in its Pacific Islands territories appears to have been focused largely on Fiji. The Western Pacific High Commission was located in Suva, the capital of Fiji and this office had administrative oversight not only over the Solomon Island Protectorate, but also over other territories such as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, now two separate independent nations, Kiribati and Tuvalu respectively.

The type of development planning employed by the British can be described as involving a 'capital development project' approach. The total funds available to

finance the Plan amount to about eight million dollars (AUS)[32].   The *DP5*

development budget (p. 1) provides an illustration of this (see *Table 5.2* below):

Table 5.2: **Sources of Funds to Finance Fifth Development Plan**[33]

Source	$AUS
Allocation of Colonial Development and Welfare Funds notified by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs	4, 910, 300
Other Funds controlled by the Minister of Overseas Department to finance research	597, 900
Protectorate Special Funds (Japanese Assets and Trading Corporation Realisation	189, 000
Contribution from Protectorate Budget	352, 100
Australian South Pacific Technical Assistance Programme	77, 100
Bank Loans	1, 610, 000
United Nations Development Programme	25, 000
World Health Organization/United Nations Children Fund	147, 500
United Kingdom Technical Assistance	4, 000
Oxford famine Relief	17, 000
Total Funds Available	**7, 929, 900**
Add for planning purposes only 10% of Commonwealth Development and Welfare allocation	491, 000
Total used for planning purposes	**$8, 420, 900**

More than half of the budget was derived from Colonial Development and

Welfare Funds ($4,910,300), the remainder coming largely from bank loans

which contributed over one and half million dollars ($1,610,000).   Contributions

from the Protectorate's own budget are less than a quarter of a million dollars

($352,100).   This illustrates the high level of dependency of the Protectorate on

external funding and foreign aid.   It also clearly demonstrates that economic

development in the Protectorate had been insufficient to generate the amount

required.   This state of affairs had not improved significantly by the time *DP6* was

released (1 June 1971).   In this context, it is important to bear in mind that prior to

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[32] After World War 2, the Australian dollar was the currency in use in Solomon Islands until that was replaced by the Solomon Islands dollar at independence in July 1978. The Australian dollar was gradually phased out after that.

[33] Source: DP5

World War II, much of the development activity in the islands (apart from that conducted by multinationals and individual planters and traders) was conducted by missionaries and the Christian churches. These activities also centred on plantations, but also and perhaps more significantly, involved efforts to strengthen communication and transport and included the establishment of training institutions, schools, clinics and hospitals. In fact, only one secondary school was ever built in the Solomons by the British government.

A careful reading of *DP5* and *DP6* clearly illustrates the fact that the British colonial government, when it did eventually decide to become more active in the protectorate, controlled the whole national development process. Thus, for example, *DP5* refers to three important changes in relation to previous development plans. One of these was that Colonial Development and Welfare funds could now be applied only to capital projects (rather than to both recurrent and capital projects). This meant that recurrent projects were to be funded from sources other than the Colonial and Welfare funds. This decision was reflected in the following principles (*Fifth Development Plan 1968-1970*, p. 2):

> 8. The following principles have been observed in selecting projects for inclusion in the Plan:-
>> (1) certain projects which were undertaken during the Fourth Plan period and which have not yet been completed have naturally had to take first priority in the Fifth Plan;
>> (2) in deciding what new projects should be included consideration has been given to the requirements of agreed policy as expressed in White Papers agreed by the Legislative Council and as modified by the capacity of the Departments of Government to implement such projects and by the aid ceilings

imposed for development expenditure in 1968, and likely to be imposed for 1969.

The underlying rationale appears to have been the avoidance of waste. Prudence and sound management appear to have been the order of the day. From Britain's point of view, this was perfectly reasonable at a time when Britain itself was also rebuilding after the ravages of World War II. However, in imposing such restrictions, the government was exercising its sole sovereign authority in such a way as to limit the development of the protectorate, something that highlights those issues of accountability that were raised in *Chapter 1*.

The second change to which reference is made in *DP5* is the decision to group projects into six categories (rather than into four categories as was previously the case) (*Fifth Development Plan 1968-1970*, p.3):

Table 5.3: **Fifth Development Plan: Classification of Major Projects**[34]

Project classification	$AUS	%
Administration and Organization	356, 000	4.31
Physical survey and Census	170, 000	2.06
Communications	2, 116, 000	25.62
Natural Resources	2, 328, 300	28.19
Social	3, 209, 800	38.96
Miscellaneous	79, 500	0.96
Total Committed	**8, 259, 600**	**100**
Uncommitted	161, 300	
Colonial Development and Welfare allocation as described in para. 8 (4)	8, 420, 900	

Although no direct comparisons can be made between *DP5* and previous development plans, it is clear from the breakdown of actual costs and percentages

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[34] Source:DP5

for the various projects that more was to be spent on "economic and communications schemes" than had previously been the case, with less being spent on "education and medical projects" (p. 2). A target figure of $161,300 remained uncommitted in order to allow for (a) a degree of flexibility should preliminary estimates prove to be too low; (b) the inevitable carry over from year to year (without upsetting too seriously the balance of new projects planned for the succeeding year); (c) the inclusion of some small new projects (p. 2). Such a small exigency fund suggests a high level of confidence in the planning process, something that seems difficult to justify in the light of actual achievements.

The third change referred to in *DP 5* was the intention to cap the actual rate of expenditure to an annual ceiling approved by the British Government (as opposed to controlling the expenditure on schemes over the period of the plan as a whole) (p. 2):

> (3) in the years 1964 to 1966 underspending on Colonial Development and Welfare account has been as much as 40% of expenditure. It has accordingly been judged prudent to plan for expenditure on this account 10% in excess of known allocations for the years 1968/1969 and 19169/1970. Actual expenditure will be controlled strictly in accordance with the annual estimated provision as approved by the Legislative Council.

The three changes to which reference has been made (the limitation of Colonial Development and Welfare funds to capital projects; the percentage reduction in spending on education and medical projects; annual project funding capping) were no doubt, from the British government's perspective, simply pragmatic measures designed to avoid wastage and to ensure the success of the plans. However, they

did not represent any growth in understanding of the real needs and interests of the people of the islands. This is particularly true in the case of the percentage reduction in spending on education and medical projects. Furthermore, *DP5* (p. 3) introduced some significant caveats, including a surprisingly direct statement that the plan was not based on any professional economic appraisal, and a decision not to include either private sector projects or projects requiring more than a two year implementation period:

> 11. The Plan does no more than set out projects in the public sector which it is intended should be implemented in the two year period 1968 – 1970. It does not embrace projects in the private sector and is based on no professional economic appraisal, nor are national income statistics available from which a projection can be made of the effects of the developments planned. Nevertheless, it is considered that the individual schemes reflect a proper sense of priorities and a balanced approach to the development of the protectorate as a whole.

In other words, the British government was not prepared to conduct the type of research that is necessary for effective development planning. Its so-called 'proper sense of priorities' and 'balanced approach' were based on nothing more than assumption. It had nothing to say about the real needs of the islanders, nothing to say about why the projects identified were considered important or what benefits were expected as a result of their implementation. At best, this approach could be described as blind optimism on the part of the British administration; at worst, as culpable neglect of its responsibilities. There appears to have been no sense of accountability for the effects of this type of inadequate planning activity.

Needless to say, the same sense of 'blind optimism' evident in *DP5* is also evident in *DP6*. It is stated in the Introduction to *DP6* that the plan "sets the pace for major transformation of the economy of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate" (*Sixth Development Plan 1971-1973*, p. 4). It is envisaged, in particular, that during the 1970s there would be "increased participation in and responsibility for policy formulation by the Protectorate's own citizens, investment in major new projects in agriculture, forestry and mining and the achievement of an educational system designed to produce the manpower needed to sustain and expand the economy as well as attain a high degree of localization of posts presently held by expatriates" (p. 4). Even so, although the continuing substantial dependence of the economy on the public sector is noted, it is not addressed. Furthermore, the document itself again refers (as in the case of *DP5*) to the lack of statistical information. Even basic information about the country's economy is absent. Indeed, there is a complete absence of any genuine policy and planning framework (p.7). Nevertheless, the planners reported that the plan reflected "honestly" and accurately, the "circumstances of the Protectorate" (p. 4). In view of all of this, the stated confidence in the future can be seen to have been nothing more than empty rhetoric. After all, constitutional changes, involving planning for self-government, were already well underway. The British government would not itself have to deal directly with the consequences of its failure to take development planning in the Solomons seriously. It could point to its optimistic forecasts prior to independence and blame the Solomon Islanders themselves if these forecasts were not achieved. After all, they would have the advantage of being able to draw on the services of the Statistical Office (set up in 1970) and the permanent Planning Unit (set up in 1971) (p. 7).

The British, without any apparent sense of embarrassment or paradox, announced in their planning document (*DP6*, p. 5) that planning was, in fact, not possible in most sectors:

> 6. It has not been possible to make specific investment projections for the private sector, and local government is still at a rudimentary stage and is in no position to engage in planning.

Failing entirely to address one aspect of this problem (planning for private sector development), they went on to note (p. 5) that:

> It is intended during the plan period to upgrade local government so that local councils can play an effective role in the preparation and implementation of the Seventh Development Plan.

Underlying this type of statement is the clear message that the British could not themselves be expected to take any responsibility for past, present or future planning deficiencies. So far as past and present planning deficiencies are concerned, it is important to stress that the British Solomon Islands Protectorate had, at the time of *DP6*, been under British control/ protection for over half a century. So far as future planning deficiencies are concerned, it is important to note that the mere establishment of a Statistical Office and a permanent Planning Unit, together with the (unspecified) upgrading of local councils, could hardly be expected to be sufficient remedy for many decades of inadequate and incompetent planning efforts.

The frenetic development activity by the British in relation to the Solomons after World War II was more apparent than real. The agitation of the islanders made development activity necessary; the economic situation faced by Britain itself (in recovering from World War II) created difficulties in relation to development activity beyond its own shores. Thus, it is observed in *DP6* that the "overall objective of the Sixth Development Plan is to lay the basis for substantially reduced external dependence in this [1970s] decade, a pre-requisite for effective self-government" (*Sixth Development Plan 1971-1973*, p.5). The hasty departure of the British from Solomon Islands described by Mary O'Callaghan (see *Chapter 1*) may have been due, in part, to an awareness of the likely consequences of their failure to deal adequately with development issues.

The British approach to development planning in Solomon Islands was a centralised one. The efforts of local people were conducted in the context of a policy framework established by the Colonial Office in London (see Bennett (1987), especially *Chapter 14*, pp. 311-343). Their task was simply to design development plans that reflected the political and ideological thinking of the British government of the day. Within the Protectorate itself, development planning was also a highly centralised exercise involving bureaucratic processes. All of this centralised planning took place in the absence of any real understanding of the economy and without recourse to statistical information. So far as the British were concerned, the process was directed largely by political expediency. Thus, development planning in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate can be described as a bureaucratic process that was largely politically motivated.

5.4 Development planning: Solomon Islands

In any consideration of national development policy and planning in independent Solomon Islands, a number of critical issues emerge. These include issues relating to national leadership, political rhetoric and legitimacy (including anti-colonialism), state-hood and nation building, and practical considerations relating to uneven development and distribution of the nation's wealth. National development policy and planning documents cover a wide range of categories. The focus here is on one of these, that is, the private sector. In particular, it is on policy initiatives designed to encourage indigenous Solomon Islanders to participate actively in business enterprises. The overriding rationale for this focus on the private sector is, as Chand (1984) notes, that this sector is critical to economic growth and hence, to development. Thus, close examination of this policy area is not only appropriate in the context of Solomon Islands, but also significant in terms of its direct relevance to the issue of accountability, to the question of where the blame for problems relating to economic and social development over the past two and a half decades lies.

In terms of the categorisation of development planning approaches proposed by Chand (1984), national development policy and planning in independent Solomon Islands can be described as initially exemplifying, under the Premiership of Solomon Mamaloni who came to power in 1981, a 'comprehensive approach'. He replaced the 1980 – 84 development plan with a *Programme of Action* (*1981-84*), a programme that Chand (1984, p. 765) interpreted as "a direct result of the rejection of the old government's development manifesto". That Programme of Action was cast in very general terms and had the following broad objectives

covering, administration and decision-making; economic productivity; equitable distribution of development; and redirection of policies and programmes in such a way as to ensure that they were appropriate to the needs of Solomon Islanders, especially the majority in the rural areas. It included a list of projects, each of which was ranked in relation to one or more of the broad objectives.

Before considering in detail the private sector as a development policy arena, it is important to discuss some of the issues that overshadowed national development concerns at independence.

5.5   Contextual issues

5.5.1   National leadership

Some of the major issues relating to national development at the time of independence emerged out of, and centred on, the hasty departure of the British. Although Solomon Islands is a small country in comparative terms, it is also a socially diverse one (see *Chapter 4*) in which there was no dominant group (in social, political or economic terms) with the power and authority to assume the mantle of leadership after the departure of the British. In Fiji, Sir Ratu Kamisese Mara was especially groomed by the British to take over political power; there was no equivalent of this type of preparation in the case of Solomon Islands. There was, therefore, a political vacuum. Thus, although Solomon Mamaloni was the country's first chief minister when self-government was granted in 1976, it was Sir Peter Kenilorea who became the nation's first Prime Minister. This lack of adequate preparation for national leadership was compounded by the fact that nationhood and, with it, the rights and freedoms conferred on its citizens by a

modern nation state were, in some respects, inconsistent with *kastom*, the very basis of Solomon Islands society. These two factors, taken together, were to have huge political ramifications. Solomon Mamaloni (1992, p. 8), for instance, was only too aware of these contradictions when he wrote the following:

> What is a nation? …it is a community of people of the same ethnic origin… Its own traditions, cultures and rules (unwritten) were given by God to govern its own affairs. A nation uses its individuality to discern what part it is to play in order to safeguard the interests and well-being of its people.

Indeed, he went on to add (Mamaloni, 1992, p. 8) that were a smaller nation to merge with a larger one, the likely consequence would be the loss of the smaller nation's identity. No doubt Mamaloni, in making these remarks, was mindful of the diversity that exists in Solomon Islands. After all, he later insisted that even after ten years of political independence, the "so-called Happy Isles are far from being one nation and under [the] present constitutional structure will never become one" (Mamaloni, 1992, p. 11).

In retrospect, the ethnic conflict of 1998 seems almost inevitable. Also inevitable perhaps have been the problems associated with the fact that since independence national leaders have tended to be selected on the basis of personality rather than on the basis of ideological identity and political party membership. In fact, there are almost as many political parties in Solomon Islands as there are members of parliament. Thus, for example, when Francis Billy Hilly was elected as the third prime Minister of Solomon Islands, he was an independent Member of Parliament. Similarly, when Bartholomew Ulufa'alu became Prime Minister, he

was one of only two sitting members of his political party. Historically, at least one third of members of parliament lose their seats at each round of national parliamentary elections and each seat may be contested by as many as one or one-and-half dozen candidates (see for example Alasia (1997); Fraenkel (2004), especially *Chapter 11*, pp. 131-138). Bearing in mind the fact that even the largest constituencies have, at most, ten thousand voters, it becomes clear that the ratio of candidates to voters is usually high. Furthermore, in the prevailing first-past-the-post electoral system, candidates frequently win by a mere handful of votes.[35] If democracy could be said to be about people exercising their citizenship rights, then Solomon Islands would undoubtedly be one of the most democratic countries in the world. In fact, in the first national general election, one of those elected was a highly respected local leader who was unable to read or write, something that severely handicapped him in his four years as a parliamentarian. Apart from those standing for Honiara seats, aspiring national politicians generally contest parliamentary elections primarily as individuals and only secondarily as political party members. Their best chance of winning is therefore to contest a seat in the local area where they originally come from where family connections and relationships can be fully exploited. This leaves considerable scope for unacceptable practices. Indeed, it is not uncommon after the elections to hear allegations of bribery, which are usually lodged by losing candidates.[36]

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[35] In the 2001 general election, one candidate won by just two votes: "SIAC's Afu Billy narrowly missed becoming the sole woman MP in the new parliament by two votes, obtaining 699 votes in the East Malaita constituency to former civil servant Joseph [Joses] Wawari Sanga's 701" (Jon Fraenkel, 2004, p. 134).

[36] This was illustrated in the riots that followed the April 2006 election of Snyder Rini as Prime Minister.

This state of affairs makes parliamentary democracy very unstable and unpredictable. In fact, the Kemakeza government was the first to complete its full four year term of office in Solomon Islands, the others having been dissolved in mid-term following a vote of no confidence. This type of governance experience characterises all of the national parliaments of *wantok* Melanesia (that is, those of Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu as well as Solomon Islands)[37] and has huge implications for national development policy and planning.

5.5.2 Political rhetoric and legitimacy: Anti-colonialism, statehood and nation building

One could say that the explicit political rhetoric contained in Development Plans is a corollary of the lack of British attention to grooming national leadership at independence. Indigenous national politicians have tended to base the legitimacy of their appeal on rhetoric rather than genuine authority. This rhetoric, generally referring to the twin ideals of statehood and nation building, is generally anti-colonial in nature. Such an appeal is not necessarily disingenuous. After all, legitimacy must be anchored somewhere. To attempt to anchor it in relation to national development policy and planning is, in many respects, both logical and sensible: development policy and planning was also the British government's major tool of political legitimacy. Improving the social and economic wellbeing of the islanders through national development policy and planning (largely unsuccessful though it proved to be) was the primary rationale for the lengthy period of British colonial influence in Solomon Islands. Thus, both during and

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[37] There is a large body of literature on this issue in the *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia* project based at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies of The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

after the period of British colonisation, development policy and planning were overtly political and bureaucratic in nature precisely because they were, and are, central to the appeal to legitimacy. One consequence of this is the much centralised nature of national development policy and planning. Thus, Sanga (2001, p. 34) observes that, since independence, national development policy and planning has continued to be centralised even where the focus appears to be on rural development and even where the language used appears to support decentralisation. This remains the case in spite of the fact that national development policy and planning is characterised in the main by incoherence in relation to the support of national policies, general ambiguity and lack of clarity, incompetent policy management, and a failure to ensure that those likely to be affected, especially those in rural areas, are kept informed. As a result, this highly centralised policy development framework has resulted only in "little pockets of development located sparsely in the regions" which are "either planned or influenced by the topography of the islands" (p. 69).

One consequence of a highly politicised independence process is likely to be that it places greater emphasis on foreign policy than on domestic issues (Sanga, 2001). Thus, Sanga (2001, p. 69) observes that:

> Successive governments' priority since independence has not been the domestic issues. Rather, they have seen foreign policy and establishing diplomatic relations as priorities and have paid little attention to developing the regions.

While it is difficult to fault a newly emerging nation for paying considerable attention to its foreign policy, the fact remains that a failure to attend to the need

to develop the economic base of Solomon Islands to a point where it can meet its own domestic commitments has created a situation in which "very rapid population growth, inequalities, high formal unemployment and very little improvement on public facilities have given rise to competing pressures on government resources" (Sanga, 2001, p. 69).

Clearly, then, development policy and planning remain highly centralised in Solomon Islands. So, too, does the governance infrastructure in spite of the clearly held aspirations for greater regional autonomy (Paia, 2003). A major consequence of a highly centralised and unitary form of government is the fact that provincial government entities have become mere extensions of national government rather than real partners in development. This has led to duplication of responsibilities, waste of resources, and a general lack of initiative and innovation at the provincial government level (see *Chapter 6*).

The political orientation of national development policy and planning in Solomon Islands is evident in its centralised nature. A more decentralised approach would be more likely to take account of the cultural dimension of development.

5.5.3   Practical considerations

The British colonial government appears to have paid little or no attention to cultural issues in its development activities. The incoming Solomon Islands leaders therefore had no prior experience of development policy and planning that took culture into consideration. This can be seen as one aspect of the failure of the British government to prepare the Solomon Islanders for independence. Equally, there is little evidence that successive governments since independence

have attended to the cultural imperatives that underpin contemporary development thinking and practice. They, too, have focused on the political and administrative dimensions of development, failing to address important issues that are evident only at a deeper conceptual and theoretical level, issues that, nevertheless, have significant practical implications. Some of the practical difficulties surrounding development following independence are considered below.

5.5.3.1   Uneven development

At independence, the economy of Solomon Islands was largely plantation-based and characterised by uneven development. Thus, for example, almost all industrial activity was concentrated in the central Solomons (particularly in Guadalcanal and Western Province). People from all over the country were attracted to this area in search of work and formal education, especially at secondary school and tertiary levels. This uneven development was, and is, compounded by the fact that much of the land used for plantations is customary land rather than crown land. The labourers on that land were not free to develop their own plots for food gardens as had been the custom in the subsistence, rural-based economy that is rapidly being replaced. With basic tools such as axes and knives, they can supplement their formal income with produce from the land. However, the inevitable encroachment on customary land creates tensions, tensions which, over time, can lead to ethnic tension. This is what Kabutaulaka (1999) meant when he attributed aspects of ethnic tension in Solomon Islands to unemployment and "lack of respect for land". All of these things required urgent attention by the new independent government. Its attention, however, was directed elsewhere; its development efforts were primarily oriented towards the international arena.

5.5.3.2   Equal distribution

The fact that population and resources are unevenly spread in Solomon Islands has led to problems of unequal distribution of wealth. These problems needed to be addressed as quickly and as delicately as possible. Despite the many failings of national leaders since independence, the fact is that they took the issue of distribution seriously. They were well aware of the rumblings just prior to independence (Paia, 2003) and of the need to find a way of distributing the county's wealth more evenly at the same time as providing those whose islands and lands were being used to generate the nation's economic wealth with a realistic return for their contribution to nation building.

From a political standpoint, it was considerations such as these that led to support for the emergence of the provincial form of government which currently exists in Solomon Islands. At the same time, a provincial government system had an inbuilt tendency to reinforce the type of the divide and rule tactic used by the British when they divided the British Solomon Islands Protectorate into four districts: Eastern, Central, Malaita and Western. Even so, a provincial system recognises the country's diversity, and, in particular, the significance of the fact that it is the rural-based population who actually own the country's natural resources. Having a provincial system of government could, in principle, provide an appropriate vehicle for ensuring that resource owners have an opportunity to participate in the production, distribution and consumption of these natural resources. In other words, the provincial government system could give greater social and economic power to the rural- based majority of the country's population. At present, however, as Paia (2003) observes, the provincial

government system is little more than an extension of central government bureaucracy. Up till now, there "has been no institutional framework to involve landowners in the design and implementation of development projects and investments on their land" (Aqorau, 2004, p. 116). In fact, no attempt has been made "to ensure their [i.e. landowners] rights to resources are translated into tangible benefits to contribute to their social and economic wellbeing" (p.116).

The approach to national development policy and planning following independence was inherited from the British. The provincial government system was copied from that of neighbouring Papua New Guinea which gained political independence only a few years earlier (in 1975). Thus far, neither has proved effective in addressing the nation's problems.

It has already been noted that from a critical and theoretical point of view the process of national development policy and planning in Solomon Islands has been characterised by the application of legal-rational principles. Cultural considerations have been subordinated. The effect of this, so far as the involvement of indigenous Solomon Islanders in the private sector is concerned, is discussed in *section 5.6* following.

5.6   Policy planning and implementation: The private sector

The development policy frameworks left behind by the British were the only instruments of familiarity to the new administrators to help shape a new nation. Viewed in this light, it is highly optimistic at best, if not downright naïve, to expect the process to be free of hiccups and obstacles. This did not dampen the enthusiasm of the nation's new leaders.

5.6.1   Optimism and high expectations

When Solomon Islands gained political independence in 1978 one of the expectations of all Solomon Islanders was that a prosperous Solomon Islands society would be created. As a result of British colonisation, Solomon Islands had become grafted onto the global market system and capitalist economy. Political independence was an unprecedented opportunity because, for the first time in the modern history of Solomon Islands, Solomon Islanders themselves were given responsibility for deciding their own future, especially regarding social and economic development. In this newly formed nation, responsibility for helping to bring about development was left essentially in the hands of national leaders and the central government. This overwhelming responsibility was to occupy the minds of the leaders of the young nation throughout its first two-decades of political independence.

5.6.2   From optimism to concern

Solomon Islands gained political independence from Britain on 7th July 1978. Leading up to that auspicious moment, the architects of the pre-independence *Solomon Islands National Development Plan 1975-1979* (S.I. NDP, 1975 Vol.1, Ch.6, p. 48) noted that:

> Most of the developed private sector is owned and controlled by non-Solomon Islanders; … A sustained breakthrough into the developed sector by local enterprise depends on supplies of commercial know-how and financial capital which so far have been hard to obtain in combination.

As noted earlier (see *Chapter 4*), Solomon Islands had been a British Protectorate since 1893. An acting Resident Commissioner was appointed in 1896 and the

colonial administration was established. Its development before and after World War II, primarily through plantation agriculture by large foreign companies, contributed to the exclusion of indigenous Solomon Islanders from the developed sector (Bennett, 1987). Non-Solomon Islanders controlled the economy at independence. Although they included a few European traders who had remained after the war, the majority were Chinese general merchants from Hong Kong, many of whom were descendants of Chinese migrants who came to Solomon Islands after the war and initially worked as cooks, carpenters and mechanics. These people had helped to rebuild the devastated economy. By the time of political independence from Britain in 1978, the descendants of these Chinese migrants, together with Chinese migrants who arrived later, had already established themselves in the wholesale and retail sectors. They played, and continue to play, a significant role in the market economy of independent Solomon Islands. As the country stood at the threshold of political independence, it is this situation that motivated the architects of the Solomon Islands *National Development Plan 1975 – 1979* to call for a substantial breakthrough of indigenous Solomon Islanders into the developed sector. Only then would independence be economically as well as politically meaningful to indigenous people. There was, however, the further issue that the majority of Solomon Islanders lived – and continue to live – in rural areas. As noted in the Solomon Islands *National Development Plan 1975 – 1979* (S.I. NDP, 1975, Vol.1, Ch.3, p. 19):

> No commercial activity has been deliberately located away from Honiara
> so far, except for those which could not be located in Honiara anyway. . . .
> There is a widespread assumption that all manufacturing and processing

activities will take place in Honiara; continuance of this trend would run against the government's overall objectives.

Thus, in 1975, at a time when Solomon Islands had, in preparation for full independence, a Governing Council headed by a Chief Minister, the government of the day recognised that only by encouraging indigenous Solomon Islanders to engage in private sector activities would it be possible to disperse economic development to the rural areas and thus enhance the socio-economic development of the majority of Solomon Islanders. Indeed, there was a clear understanding that the pre-independence *NDP 1975-79* was a transitional plan only, a plan that was designed to help the country to make the transition from a British dependent colony to an independent sovereign nation. Hence, it was clear that the national government recognised the need for (S.I. NDP, 1975 Vol.2, Part 1, Section 2, p. 2):

> a deliberate slanting of economic development into operations which can be owned, wholly or partly, by Solomon Islanders as individuals or groups; special credit arrangements to assist local companies and co-operatives to develop and expand; [improvement of] commercial law so that local firms can comply with it; and the closure of some forms of activity to non-Solomon Islanders.

On the whole, government was optimistic about the future and committed to ensuring that the indigenous population took advantage of opportunities to reap maximum benefit from the nation's resources. As indigenous leaders stood at the threshold of assuming leadership from the British colonial administrators, all of this seemed possible. In an overly optimistic tone, government, through the development planners, stated that one of its major objectives was "to build a

national economic structure which extends local ownership and control to all key areas of the economy" (S.I. NDP, 1975 Vol.2, Part 2, Section 2, p. 7). It seems unlikely that those who made this statement were fully aware of the enormous undertaking such a commitment involved. In hindsight, the Solomon Islands *National Development Plan 197 – 1979* was accurate in diagnosing the problems that needed to be addressed but, so far as actual planning for change was concerned, overly optimistic about the possibilities. Overall, the document expresses, through the rhetoric of political independence, the excitement and enthusiasm of a youthful nation. Even so, there were attempts to determine what measures were necessary for bringing about the desired changes. One of these was to be 'affirmative action' in the form of direct assistance by way of incentive schemes for Solomon Islanders (S.I. NDP, 1975 Vol.2, Part 2, Section 2, p. 7). It is, for example, noted in the National Development Plan - Section 14: Business and Credit - that one of the government's aims was to expand business activity by (indigenous) Solomon Islanders, whether as a group or as individuals. Some of the principal methods of achieving this intended expansion were (S.I. NDP, 1975, Vol.2, Part 2, Section 14, p. 28):

- Licensing of businesses in selected sectors so as to remove imbalances and ensure openings for local enterprise.
- Reservation for local enterprise of service industry openings in any major new commercial development e.g. mining.
- Commercial activity by local councils where services or production are needed but local individual or group enterprise is not forthcoming.
- Introduction of tax incentives for localization of jobs and ownership, decentralization, pricing policies and use of locally produced inputs.

This was an impressive undertaking. In retrospect, however, it is evident that one major problem was that government stability – as is also the case in the neighbouring Melanesian countries of Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea – could not be assured. Furthermore, the National Development Plan left government and development planners open to the charge of advocating discriminatory practices. Even so, for any country in the embryonic stages of nation building, policies of the kind to which reference has been made may be necessary and, hence, justifiable. The economic prescriptions in the NDP would, it was hoped, lay the foundations of, and, presumably, create the ideal catalyst for social and economic development in the `birth' and `growth' of a new nation. The intention was that by 1978 (the year of political independence), a substantial part of the private sector would be owned and operated by indigenous Solomon Islanders (S.I. NDP, 1975, Vol.2, Part 2, Section 14, p. 28). Whether government and the development planners really believed that their prescriptions could be implemented within this timeframe is open to question. In the event, as we now know, the timeframe proved to be unrealistic and the strategies themselves now appear to be ill adapted to the political and social circumstances of the time.

5.6.3   Disappointment

In June 1977, when a review of the National Development Plan (1975-79) was carried out, it was noted that (June Review, 1977, p. 2):

> Most of the developed commercial sector is owned and controlled by non-Solomon Islanders. The [non-commercial] sector is owned by nationals, but is subject to considerable influence by the developed sector.

Even so, it was decided then that no major alterations would be made to the National Development Plan (NDP). In the *Foreword* to the NDP review, the then Chief Minister, Peter Kenilorea - now Sir Peter Kenilorea - who took over after the first Chief Minister, Solomon Mamaloni[38], wrote: "The Plan covers a five year period and it is not the intention of this Government to replace it with a totally new one before that period expires. To do so would not only be costly but also most unrealistic" (June Review 1977, Foreword). As signalled in the review, in the Area of Business and Credit at least, efforts to assist indigenous people to venture into business would continue over the next three years (June Review, 1977, p. 21):

> The Business Advisory division will continue to encourage indigenous business ventures where the experience and expertise promises a reasonable chance of success. However, much of its efforts will be in continuing to help raising the level of management and accounting skills of existing businesses, particularly the larger ones that make the most significant contribution to the indigenous business sector.

The tone is less optimistic than that of the NDP itself. Nevertheless, some optimism remained. If deficiencies in the areas of management and accounting skills were identified and addressed, all might still be well. Although the report notes the absence of indigenous business enterprise, it does not identify the underlying causes. Instead, the Chief Minister noted that there had been "[insufficient] time to assess and realize the effects of programmes implemented at the beginning of the period" (Foreword, June Review, 1977).

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[38] Note that he did not regain the post of Chief Minister in the "final general election of the colonial era … in July 1976" (Alasia, 1997, p. 7).

5.6.4   Renewed optimism

By 1980, when the next National Development Plan was produced, the first Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Peter Kenilorea, was in office. In fact, the *NDP 1980-84* was also the country's first National Development Plan. With the *NDP 1975-79* conceived as a transition plan, the *NDP 1980-84* sought to meet the perceived needs, hopes and aspirations of the majority of Solomon islanders who live in the rural areas. With a renewed sense of optimism, the Prime Minister had this to say in the Foreword of the new National Development Plan (NDP, 1980-84, 1980 Vol.1, Foreword):

> Since we became a fully independent nation on 7 July 1978 this is the first opportunity we have had to shape the overall direction of our own development. This is our greatest challenge and all of us, from politicians in the national legislature and civil servants in the government to the rural gardener and fisherman, must try to make the fullest use of this opportunity. From a national planning point of view, this is the very first time that we, in our own right, have made the decisions about the activities we intend to do for our overall benefit both as a people and as a nation. This plan, therefore, is our First National Development Plan.

In similar vein, he went on to stress that (NDP, 1980-84, 1980 Vol.1, Foreword):

> The previous plan – NDP 1975-79 - was drawn up during a transitional period and it has certain programmes and projects which will continue into this new plan period. But, apart from this, if we are to connect our new plan to the previous one by adopting substantially the same philosophy and aims, we will have done so little in our need for effective and positive decolonization: which is to free ourselves from those aspects of our colonial past that hinder our progress and development as an independent and forward-going people.

Those aspects of the "colonial past that hinder . . . progress and development" were not made explicit. However, it was evident from the context that reference was being made to the economic dominance of non-indigenous people and that the intention was to encourage indigenous Solomon Islanders to play a more active role in both the private and public sectors.

The Prime Minister's remarks signalled that political independence was to be the beginning of a process of political, social and economic development for Solomon Islanders. However, although the previous NDP (1975-79) had specific provisions relating to the engagement of indigenous Solomon Islanders in the private sector, the 1980-84 NDP did not. This was, at least in part, because there was "little detailed statistical information available on the nature and scale of Solomon Islander industrial and commercial activity" (NDP, 1980-84, 1980 Vol.1, Ch. 5, p. 102). Also, the emphasis was now on rural development, as indicated in the Foreword by the Prime Minister (NDP, 1980-84, 1980 Vol.1, Foreword):

> In this plan we intend to do much more for our people. We intend to bring development to areas of the greatest need and where development will be acceptable to the people. . . . The basic [objective] (sic) of this plan is to promote effective rural development which will provide the opportunity for as many of our people as is possible to share in the benefits of our country's development.

What this meant in practice was that Government would play a much greater role in the political, social and economic development of the new Solomon Islands nation.

The National Development strategy was to be given coded expression in the country's National Development Plan 1985-89 which stipulated, under the heading of Social and Economic Progress, that "Government will continue to actively participate in strategic areas of the economy' (NDP, 1985-89, 1985, Part 1, Ch. 3, p. 18).

The *National Development Plan 1985-89* placed greater emphasis than did the earlier ones on indigenous business entrepreneurship (NDP, 1985-89, 1985, Part 1, Ch. 3, p. 18):

> The development of indigenous entrepreneurship will be encouraged and fostered whilst genuine foreign investment with significant local participation and employment in production activities will be encouraged and supported.

In summarizing the existing situation (in 1985), the planners noted (NDP, 1985-89, 1985, Part 2, Ch. 19, p. 140) that:

> 19.4   The Government initiated its support of business development in the mid 1970s with emphasis on trade stores which were the predominant type of business. In recent years the scope of the assistance has expanded to include petrol depots, transport business and other types of ventures . . . [including] agricultural, fisheries and forestry.

Immediately after that summary, however, a number of constraints were identified (NDP, 1985-89, 1985, Part 2, Ch. 19, p. 140):

19.5   A major constraint on both co-operative and general business development is the poor road system and inter-island shipping services, which restrict inward and outward the distribution of goods.

19.6   Inexperience in running business, including, limited management and financial skill, is also a key restraint.

19.7   The limited size of local markets and the cost and difficulties in exporting tend to increase the difficulties of developing new business.

These acknowledged constraints related directly to the Government's policy on commerce in general and indigenous business entrepreneurship in particular and were therefore extremely significant.   There was, however, no reference to constraints of another type – constraints relating to the traditional social structures, norms and values that inevitably influence indigenous entrepreneurs and their business activities.   After all, capitalist activity in general, and business entrepreneurship in particular, are relatively new to Solomon Islands, and Solomon Islanders' reaction to them are inevitably influenced by their cultural expectations.   Thus, the following strategies for promoting indigenous business enterprises and cooperatives, comprehensive though they appear to be, would be unlikely to prove adequate unless there were a significant culture shift (NDP, 1985-89, 1985, Part 2, Ch. 19, p. 141):

91.8   The primary strategy will be to promote indigenous business enterprises and co-operatives by providing potential investors with the requisite financial resources, knowledge and skills, and by actively seeking Solomon Island participation in foreign investment ventures.

19.9   A complementary strategy of the Government will be to provide an effective advisory and accounting extension service for those Solomon

Islanders owned businesses and co-operative societies which cannot afford the services of private chartered accountants. . . .

19.10 The Government will also organize and provide training courses and seminars, and disseminate information on business and management practice through all forms of media, including specialized publications such as booklets. Greater use will also be made of the radio as a mean of keeping people informed of commercial affairs.

As with all things that relate to society and people generally, a National Development Plan has to be understood within a certain socio-historical and cultural context. In other words, a National Development Plan is not value-neutral. It is inevitably underpinned by a particular philosophical position. In Solomon Islands, the underlying rationale is that economic prosperity depends on economic growth and economic growth depends on entrepreneurial activity within a capitalist economic structure. In the wider context, the argument remains that national development policy and planning at the national government level in Solomon Islands is basically a political phenomenon and bureaucratic process.

5.7   Shift in policy

In the immediate change-over of Government from Francis Billy Hilly to Solomon Mamaloni in late 1994, a Solomon Star editorial (23 November) had this to say in connection with the policy of getting indigenous Solomon Islanders to actively engage and participate in the private or business sector (Solomon Star, Wednesday 23 November, 1994, p. 4):

Running a business is a serious business. Now the Mamaloni government intends to expand the area in which indigenous Solomon Islanders can participate in business. Under its policies, strategies and programme of

action, it is the government's policy to "encourage more indigenous people to participate in various investments". It will reserve certain business to be taken only by indigenous Solomon Islanders. And it is the time for Solomon Islanders to work at it. But before we can dive into the unknown seas, there are certain questions we must ask ourselves. How many Solomon Islanders are prepared to try, take the risk and do something better for themselves and their families? How many Solomon Islanders will say that there is no capital to start the business? . . . Opportunities are always around, but many Solomon Islanders do not want to take the challenge . . . .

The implication is that indigenous people are neither sufficiently enterprising, nor sufficiently willing to commit themselves to hard work, to take up the government's challenge. This is simply a reiteration of the commonly held misconception that indigenous people are lazy (Alatas, 1977) and averse to risk-taking. In this regard Paul Gardner (1989, p. 119) has observed that in Melanesia generally, "entrepreneurs arose in surprisingly large numbers, [but] capable Melanesian managers have been notably lacking". A more plausible explanation (than one relating to laziness or aversion to risk-taking) for the under-representation of indigenous Solomon Islanders in business is that they lack, for perfectly understandable cultural and historical reasons, a clear understanding of what business actually involves. For indigenous Solomon Islanders, going into business is like diving into an unknown sea. Herein lays the dilemma facing indigenous Solomon Islanders in relation to social and economic development in general and private business enterprise in particular. Even so, some indigenous Solomon Islanders *have* successfully engaged in business enterprise. One example, noted by Fairbairn (1988, p. 5), is Warren Paia, from the Western Province "who controls real estate, stationery, and computer businesses". People

such as Warren Paia are, however, the exception. As Fairbairn (1988) says of the handful of leading indigenous business entrepreneurs in the Pacific Islands region, they are "stars in a dull firmament" (p. 5). For many others, the temptations and the risks are simply too great. As a Solomon Star editorial observes (Solomon Star, Wednesday 23 November, 1994, p. 4):

> Some who claim to have the skills and the know-how were successful in securing large sums of money from banks but because of their reckless spendings, they ended up in bankruptcy. Many did not want to seek sound advice. They wanted to start big.

The consequences of this sort of business failure resonate throughout Solomon Islands. Where indigenous Solomon Islanders fail in business, the blame is placed squarely upon their own shoulders. Where they do not rise to the challenge of establishing new business enterprises, they are accused of not being sufficiently entrepreneurial. Little wonder, then, that Mamaloni's government, which was in power at the time, noted in the Solomon Islands Trade Directory (1995) that "[specific] areas of economic activity are no longer reserved exclusively for Solomon Islanders, although foreign investors will generally have to justify their investment . . ." (Porras & Saunders, 1995, p. 65).

This apparent change of policy did not augur well for the future chances of indigenous Solomon Islanders who are brave enough to attempt to plunge into the unknown sea of business entrepreneurship. Although foreign investors were, apparently, expected to 'justify their investment', there was no indication of what type of justification would be considered acceptable. This was of particular concern in view of the fact that it was widely known – though rarely

acknowledged – that some politicians and their cronies were involved, with the support of unscrupulous foreign investors, in a range of illicit business activities. In 1996, the much publicised forestry issue and public officers' scandal were simply the tip of the iceberg. Recently, senior public officers have been convicted of fraud and embezzlement of public monies. In retrospect, it appears that the continued dominance of the private sector by foreign investors was even more problematic than it appeared at the time when the first Solomon Islands National Development plan was penned. What we have not seen to date is any real evidence of the 'positive decolonisation' process envisaged by the pioneering political leaders of the modern Solomon Islands nation.

5.8   Overview

In hindsight, it is clear that the magnitude of the task that successive Solomon Islands leaders had to tackle in attempting to encourage the economic development of indigenous Solomon Islanders was not fully appreciated at the time of independence. The early optimism was initially replaced by caution, and that caution has, in turn, been replaced by cynicism as it has become increasingly evident that development planning can be high-jacked by those in power in order to serve their own interests and those of their collaborators (indigenous and non-indigenous). The economic and development process in Solomon Islands in the 1980s and 1990s was eventually punctuated by the outbreak of ethnic conflict in December 1998. To what extent that conflict was actually attributable to the perceived failure of the development process itself is something that is worthy of serious consideration.

I have argued that national development policy and planning in Solomon Islands, both before and after independence, has been largely conceptualised in terms of a political, bureaucratic processes. *Chapter 6* examines the way in which development is conceptualised by rural Solomon Islanders themselves.

Chapter 6

The concept of development in Ulawa Island

6.1   Introduction

The broad theoretical framework underpinning this thesis is postmodernism. Whereas mainstream (or modern) development discourse is, broadly speaking, a phenomenon of the European Enlightenment and Western modernity (see *Chapter 3*), post-modernism has involved a cultural turn in development theory that has provided the intellectual opportunity to ground alternative conceptions of development in cultural spaces and locations which are non-Western.   In this respect, post-modernism in general is as much an anti-thesis to the hegemony of Western social thought as it is a critique of modernity. Such a radical interpretation of postmodernism also provides, through post-development discourse, an opportunity to offer a logical alternative to mainstream development thought.   It is this that has motivated Nandy (1987) to call for non-Western intellectuals to use their own cultures as the point of departure for the articulation of alternative discourses of social reality.   This chapter represents an attempt to respond to that call, an attempt that involves focusing on the concept of development in one society, that of Ulawa Island, from the perspective of local culture and local narrative.[39]   Underpinning this perspective is a critique of mainstream development discourse, itself a value-laden meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1984). At the end of this chapter, the issue of state reform will be addressed in the context of discussions in *Chapters 4* and *5*.

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[39] The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Māori and Pacific Development (University of Waikato) approved my approach to data gathering.

6.2   Why Ulawa Island?

The choice of Ulawa Island as offering the best case of discussing a cultural

dimension to development is based on a number of pragmatic considerations.

Firstly, the researcher is from the Island, knows the people and speaks the

language. I disagree with the claim by academics such as Taylor and Bogdan

(1998) that this level of involvement constitutes a disadvantage. For them, the

ethics and mechanics of social science research, especially regarding novice

researchers, are such that it would be advisable for the researcher not to conduct

research in an area familiar to him or her as this may compromise the rigour of the

exercise. Although this was given more as a precaution than a rule, the point is

noted. At the same time, being from a particular place enables one to provide an

`insider view' (Gegeo, 1998) in that one has access to certain insights and

information that an `outsider' would not normally `see' or have access to. In spite

of the fact that there are apparently contradictory views on this, I believe the

advantages of being an 'insider' outweigh any disadvantages in this particular

instance: many of the field notes were derived from less formal and less structured

contexts than those which are traditionally associated with empirically-based

based research (see *Chapter 2*).[40]

This leads on to the second consideration: Ulawa Islanders share a common

language, culture and traditional knowledge system. This cultural homogeneity

allows for consistency in investigating and explaining the concept of development

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[40] Much of the material about Ulawa Island explained in this chapter, unless otherwise referenced, is based on oral knowledge passed on to me over the past years from my parents, or other relatives, particularly my uncle (Luke Rohorua). Although I have not referenced them directly in the following text, I have referred in footnotes to my younger brother, Meffrey Awao (with whom I stayed during my field trip in Honiara) where he supplied oral information.

on the island, a concept that can be fully understood only in the context of *kastom* or Ulawa Island culture. In this respect, the concept of development in Ulawa Island emerges from a specific local cultural and social context and is therefore different from the concepts that underlie national development policy and planning (see *Chapter 5*) which is conducted against the backdrop of Solomon Islands as a political entity (see *Chapter 4*). Thus, whereas national development policy and planning can be seen as a political process and bureaucratic activity, the concept of development in Ulawa can be seen as a more specifically cultural phenomenon.

The third reason why Ulawa Island was chosen for this research is that it is clearly different from many of the other islands of the Solomons in a number of ways and can, therefore, be treated as an entity in its own right. Ulawa is possibly the most 'developed' island in the whole of the country. Only Ulawa has all of the following: a water supply in most villages, a dirt road (recently completed - August 2000) around the island, a copra buying point and wharf (at Su'umoli), clinics (at Kelimai, Hadja and Su'ulopo), an airstrip (also recently completed in April 2000 at Arona), a Community High School (also a recent development (1996) at Piru Piru near Su'utoliato village), a radio wireless (at Aroaha), a postal service (at Kelimei), and most recently, access to the internet (installed March 2002 at Piru Piru Community High School). Furthermore, I was surprised when I last visited the island in August 2000 to find that many villagers around the island had built homes from permanent materials. For example, until fairly recently, the only building in the village of Su'uholo with permanent structure and roofing iron was the Anglican Church. In 2000, however, there were at least half a dozen homes in the village which were made of permanent materials, including iron

roofing. Furthermore, other families and individuals were in the process of having new permanent homes constructed. However, in spite of these infrastructure developments, Ulawa Island would still not be considered a `developed' place in the Western economic sense because, amongst other things, it still does not have widespread access to electricity and telephones. Those families and individuals who do have access to electricity own their own generators. Most importantly, however, much of the rural village lifestyle remains as it has been for decades. This is a village lifestyle which is centred predominantly on gardening and fishing. So, while infrastructure development on the Island may be different from that of other rural parts of Solomon Islands, the rural village lifestyle remains similar to that of the rest of the country in that it could be described as a 'semi-subsistence lifestyle'.

A final consideration in selecting Ulawa Island for this study is that it had, during British colonial rule, a separate island Council (*Solomon Islands National Development Plan 1975-1979, Vol. 3*) at a time when the rest of the protectorate was divided into island councils based around the major island groupings of the Solomons. Of all the islands, only Ulawa had an independent island council of its own. Ulawa could have joined either the Malaita Island Council (which is geographically closer) or the Makira Island Council (which also included islands relatively close to Ulawa, they are, Ugi and the Three Sisters). Its decision to have its own island council is indicative of its sense of its own distinctiveness.

6.3 Physical geography and locality

Ulawa Island lies roughly 250 km to the east of the capital Honiara (see *Map 2* below).

Map 2: **Map of Ulawa Island**

In the recent past, travel to the island was essentially by boat. Nowadays, however, there are two ways of reaching the island. One can travel by plane on Solomon Airlines (which takes about an hour on one of the Solomon Airlines Twin Otter Islander aircrafts), or one can travel by boat (a direct trip on one the local inter-island vessels taking around sixteen hours; a less direct one (via ports in South Malaita or Makira) taking up to twenty four hours). For some, the longer trips, because they involve visits to different parts of the country, are welcome; for others, especially those who suffer from sea-sickness, they are to be avoided except where strictly necessary.

It was indicated earlier that Ulawa Island society is based on *kastom* (island culture). In order to fully appreciate the concept of development that emerges from within this island culture, it is necessary to also understand the role played by the island's geography. In his anthropological account of Sa'a in South/Small Malaita and Ulawa Island, Walter Ivens (1927) describes the physical geography of Ulawa in the following way (pp.42-3):

> Ulawa lies twenty miles east of Sa'a. Its length is about twelve miles, and its greatest width about seven. A high ridge runs along the centre from north to south, the highest point is named Poro 'u'ua, and is 2,000 feet high. The descent on the east (sic) [west] side is steep and abrupt. At the north end a peninsula runs out a mile or so with two small hills midway. This peninsula is called Ngorangora, i.e. cape or promontory. On its east side is a marsh 'The water of the black mussel'. . . . The only harbour on Ulawa, [Su'u] Moli, is at the base of the peninsula on the west side. The island lies north and south. The north cape is known as 'The head of the pool' or 'The Pool', and the south as Arona. The Three Sisters Islands,

Olu Malau, lie fifteen miles south-east of Arona, and Uki is twenty-seven miles south-west.

On the east side there is a tiny harbour, called [Su'u] Lopo, which small craft can enter in the north-west season, and there are two little bays with sandy beaches where a boat can enter in the south-east season. The east coast has a shore reef with sand behind it. There is no shore reef on the west coast, and the land rocks, which are sharp coral, rise abruptly from deep water to a height of over twenty feet in places, and the bush comes right down to the edge of the cliff. Where the streams run into the sea on the west coast, there are openings into which a boat may enter. The mouth of the streams is often closed by a bar of flint pebbles. The wider openings are called *su'u*, harbour. All round the coast there are openings in the shore reef or rocks which are called *maalitawa*, and are used for canoe landings. . . .

The name of the island has been spelt in various ways by different writers, Uraba, Ulaua, Ulava, but the correct spelling is Ulawa. This is shown by the name Ulaqa given to it by the Lau people of Mala, who regularly replace *w* by *q* (*kw*). The Spaniards in 1568 were its first [European] discoverers, and they labelled it La Treguada, stating that its native name was Uraba. The village they landed was Āhi'a …. Surville in 1768 was off the island and named it Contrariete owing to the baffling winds.

Ivens (1927, p.2) also provides the following insight into Ulawa Island:

The western coast of Ulawa rises abruptly from the sea, a cliff of rock broken here and there by the fresh water streams that come down from the hills above. The eastern, or weather, side is much shallower and has beaches and bays. Tradition says that Ulawa was fished out of the sea by a man from Mala who was fishing on the reef. This may indicate fairly recent volcanic action. Dr Fox gives him a name, Mauwa, … but he does not seem to be known as such in Ulawa, where he is spoken of as Poro wa'i henua, He who pulled up the land.

Migrations to Ulawa may have occurred as early as 1500, although it has been argued that most migrations to Ulawa may have occurred in the early and mid-18th centuries (Walter Ivens, 1927). These migrants to Ulawa came from a number of places and directions, including South Malaita to the west, Makira (Hanuato'o) to the south, and Santa Cruz by *tepuka*[41] from the east. In addition, an outrigger canoe from Sikaiana to the north-east landed at a place called Talaukela near Su'uholo village.[42] However, although the name remains (Awao, n.d.), none of the outrigger voyagers survived, probably having been killed by earlier migrants. In fact, even today some people from Sikaiana (a Polynesian outlier) who may be related to those who travelled on the ill-fated outrigger canoe still recount the story. Some support for this story comes from the fact that the name 'Talaukela' is derived not from the Ulawa language, but from the language of Sikaiana: it refers to a place where pandanus plants grow in abundance.[43] A few years ago, there were pandanus plants in Talaukela (located near Su'uholo village). However, they were removed when Talaukela was occupied by people from the main village of Su'uholo.

Despite the legend that Poro wa'i henua 'discovered' Ulawa Island, oral tradition has it that the first inhabitants of Ulawa were the *Masi*, a nomadic people who

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[41] A *tepuka* is the traditional ocean-going outrigger canoe used by people in Temotu Province in Solomon Islands' eastern outer islands.

[42] Perhaps a testimony to the plausibility of this story is the fact that when, in 2003, an outboard motor carrying a number of people from Ulawa (who were travelling to Kira Kira on Makira Island) developed engine trouble between Ulawa and the Three Sisters Islands, it drifted for a couple of days before landing in Sikaiana. The Ulawa people were rescued by the people of Sikaiana and later returned home to Ulawa by ship.

[43] Meffrey Awao, personal communication.

lived mostly in the interior regions of the island. Oral tradition also has it that Poro Pwahearona was the first *Masi* to know about human reproduction, later imparting that knowledge to his own people. He is therefore referred to in legends as the *Man of Creation*. The *Masi* were a nomadic people who did not have a formal political structure and organisation. The existing Ulawa Island indigenous political organisation and structure is known as *ālahanga* (literally meaning *chief* or *sovereignty*), and was instituted by E'ewa Alaha (Awao, n.d.).

Jan Sanga (1989, pp. 17-19) also relates a legend or traditional story told to her by Richard Teona (now Fr. Richard Teona) about the origins of Ulawa. According to this story, the original inhabitants of Ulawa came from Sa'a in Small Malaita (for an anthropology of Sa'a, see Walter Ivens, 1927). According to the story, Ulawa Island was fished out of the sea by a certain Poromaua'ou'ou during a fishing expedition with other men from his village, including his brother, Poroe'ewalilioa. After keeping the secret of his brother's discovery of Ulawa for many years, he decided to colonise his brother's discovery" (p. 17). Along with a party of sixty people gathered from various villages around South Malaita, Poroe'ewalilioa set out for Ulawa (which was then known by the people of Sa'a as `Hanuaniakalo' or `abode of the spirits'). Poroe'ewalilioa and his party landed in Ulawa at Su'umoli, at a place in the northeast called `Tahe-nga-ramo' (now called Taheramo - `the landing place of warriors'). From there, they travelled further in-land and eventually settled in a place to the north of the island called *Hanua Maea,* holy land or place).

Ulawa Island was not, as the people of Sa'a thought, uninhabited. As noted earlier, it had already been inhabited by the *Masi*. Thus, Poroe'ewalilioa and his landing party were, in reality, simply later migrants to the island from South Malaita. However, Poroe'ewalilioa is significant in Ulawa Island folklore, the birth of his son beginning "the hereditary chieftainship that has continued on the island ever since" (Sanga, 1989, p. 18). Furthermore, after the death of his father, Poroe'ewa'alaha, hosted the first *houla* (*kastom* feast) in the island as well as building a *toohi*, custom house, in honour of his father. This initial gathering was the beginning in Ulawa of *alahanga*, the traditional chiefly system that continues to be practised today. Indeed, during the *houla*, each clan in Ulawa is invited and presented with a piece of pork just as was the case in the first gathering in *Hanua Maea* organised by Poroe'ewa'alaha. Today, the *houla* is still very significant to Ulawa islanders. Although Christianity has played a part in altering some of the rituals associated with the *houla,* and although they are now held less often than they were in the past, they remain an important part of the heart and soul of Ulawa Island society. The most recent *houla* in Ulawa was held in Aroaha village about two years ago.

The fact that these migrants from South Malaita landed and settled at the northern end of the island is also cultural and symbolically significant. This is because, as Ivens (1927) has observed, the northern end of Ulawa Island is also known as *Polungana wai* (the head of the pool). The opposite end of the island, the southern end (Arona), is referred to as *aliana wai* (the downstream-end of the pool). Today, as has always been the case since it was first inaugurated, *houla*

protocols require that formal proceedings start at the northern end of the island and finish at the southern end (in Arona).

Ulawa is a patrilineal society, *alaha* (chiefs) and *alahanga* (chiefly authority) being determined through primogeniture. Where the eldest child of a chiefly family is a daughter, *alahanga* passes to the oldest son. If the existing chief does not have a biological son as heir, a male child is adopted either from within the extended family or from other families. There have been instances in the past where refugees and visitors or guests to the island had been adopted by a barren *alaha*. Once the formal ceremonies are completed during the *houla*, the authority bestowed on the person appointed *alaha* (chief), whether he is the biological child of the previous *alaha*, or *noran* (an adopted child) is unquestioned. The rituals and ceremonies, both public and private, which culminate in the public events of the *houla*, distinguish the traditional form of leadership in Ulawa Island from that of the rest of Solomon Islands. The significance of this is indicated by the fact that when a House of Chiefs was recently proposed for the island, the honorary title of paramount chief was accorded to the existing clan who are the direct descendants of Poroe'ewa'alaha. That title currently rests with Douglas Teaitala who inherited it from his father before him, John Teaitala (see Jan Sanga, 1989, pp. 18-9 for a direct genealogy of primogenitor from Poroe'ewalilio to Douglas Teaitala).

6.4 Traditional conceptions of the Island

Although Ivens (1927) provided a physical description of Ulawa Island, and an informative account of the Island's culture, he did not discuss the common metaphors that Ulawa Islanders themselves employ to conceptualise the island.

These metaphors, which play an important role in later discussion of the Ulawa Island concept of development, are discussed below.

Modern epistemology often employs common phenomena, such as buildings, pyramids, boats or fuselages, to conceptualise society in metaphoric terms (Blackburn, 1996, p. 123). Ulawa Islanders also traditionally used metaphor to conceptualise their island society. Three of these metaphors are discussed below: the completed house, the fish and the earth oven. The first two of these metaphors are widely known throughout the island, the third is associated exclusively with Arona, at the southern end of the island.[44]

6.4.1 Complete(d) house: *nime ahu*

A metaphor that is commonly used to refer to Ulawa Island is a *complete(d) house*. In this sense, Ulawa Island represents for its people, in the metaphor of the house, a dwelling place (whose front end is the northern end of the island and whose back end is the southern ends). It is a home, a shelter from the elements of nature. This metaphor of the island as a house applies to everyone who lives on the island. In one sense, because everyone who lives on the island considers it to be home, they are all in some respects part of one big family. This understanding of the correspondence between home and family has huge implications in relation to how one perceives oneself in relation to all others. In this context, the metaphor of the island as a completed house conveys the sense that each person has a place within society. As long as you reside on the island, you belong to one of the *alahanga* (family groups or clans) that make up Ulawa Island society. A person is

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[44] Meffrey Awao, personal communication. Meffrey was provided with this information by one of our uncles, John PalmSunday Haununupaine, who is a direct descendant of the clan in Arona.

never fully an individual in his or her own right. First and foremost, a person is recognized as this or that person's son or daughter. You are known on the island by your parents, and, more particularly, by the *alahanga* (family) you belong to (either by birth, adoption or association). Even guests and visitors to the island are indirectly 'adopted' into the family with whose members they have the closest association. Guests and visitors are welcomed as family members because Ulawa is conceptualised not just as an island or place but as a home made up of different *alahanga*.

The metaphor of the island as a *complete(d) house* is a significant one. Ulawa as a completed house is made up of *alahanga* (families), each of which represents a geographical and political unit as well as a family one. Each *alahanga* has access to specific land and sea territories and resources. According to *kastom*, all of these political, land, sea and resource distributions based on the *alahanga* are underpinned by corresponding spiritual forces or foundations. Outwardly, the *alahanga* in Ulawa Island society may appear simply to be an extended family of clan. More importantly, however, it is also a political, social, economic and religious entity. In this sense, Ulawa island society differs from Solomon Islands as a whole which is a political entity made up of '*wantoks*' (see *Chapter 4*).

In the case of Ulawa Island society, because the 'house' is already full or complete, you can never add or introduce another *alahanga* at the same grassroots level in Ulawa. Thus, although there have in recent years been splinter groups within some of the existing *alahanga,* their legitimacy will remain in question as long as the present social structure remains. Even if these splinter groups were to

host a *houla* to publicly inaugurate their new *alahanga,* they would be seen as lacking the spiritual foundation to sustain that proclamation. The entire island of Ulawa, its land territory, coastline and surrounding sea, are already divided up amongst all the existing *alahanga* in the island and this underlying cultural structure provides a basis for the perceived legitimacy of the *alaha*, and *alahanga*. That is why Ulawa Island is understood metaphorically as a *complete(d) house*.

6.4.2 Fish: *hoie*

Ulawa is also spoken of metaphorically as a fish by its inhabitants (the northern end being conceived of as the head, the southern end as the tail, the central or middle part as the belly). Associated with the conception of Ulawa Island as a fish is the related narrative of the two sharks which oversee both the eastern and western sides of the Island. On the eastern side of Ulawa lives *Poro Awao,* and on the western side, *Sautehi Matawa*. Although *Poro Awao* has always been the guardian of the eastern side of the island, legend has it that the western side had no shark guardian until one day when the mother of the baby boy, *Sautehi Matawa,* was bathing him in the stream at Su'utelihia (near Mwadjoa village) and he slipped out of her wet hands and was fully submerged under the water, immediately turning into a shark which made its way into the open sea and became the guardian shark of the western coastline of Ulawa Island. Because both of these sharks are the island's sea guardians, each keeps strictly within his own territorial boundary. Thus, in metaphoric terms, the island of Ulawa is guarded by a 'father' and his 'son'. The western coastline of Ulawa faces inwards towards the central Solomons: this is where the 'son' or infant shark, *Sautehi Matawa* resides. The eastern coastline faces the vast expanse of ocean separating the inner Solomons from its eastern outer islands: this is where the 'father' or

adult shark, *Poro Awao* resides. Although there are no female guardian sharks protecting Ulawa Island, tradition has it that the 'mother' of the island is the female ancestor of some interior tribes in Small Malaita.

So what does the metaphor of the fish signify? First, it represents the idea of life, the idea that the island is not dead but alive. Indeed, the island itself is conceived of as a living entity. Thus, for example, with reference to the building of the airfield in Arona (at the southern end of Ulawa), an uncle of mine, now deceased, observed that the tail of the fish had been clipped (construction of the airfield), and the fish (Ulawa Island) would now begin to swim a little faster. He suggested that before the construction of the airfield, the fish (Ulawa) was merely drifting along, almost stationary, in the current; now that the tail had been clipped, it would wake up, flap its tail and fins, and swim along faster. This metaphoric discourse of modern development in Ulawa Island is particularly interesting in that it represents the interpretation of someone who had never attended formal schooling.

Secondly, the metaphor of the fish represents the idea that the island is a source of food for its inhabitants. In fact, fishing provides an important part of the diet of this island. Fishing is such an important life skill that boys and men who were, and are, unable to develop fishing skills are often ridiculed. They are said to be *tolo* (bush or interior), implying that their inability to fish is because they are inland bush dwellers. Indeed, during the fishing season, Saturdays were, and still generally are, set aside as a day for men to go fishing, especially deep-water fishing. In Ulawa language, Saturday is called *wa'o wa'o*, which literally means

'fishing'. Another important aspect of the fish metaphor in Ulawa Island culture relates, therefore, to the fact that, as mentioned earlier, every *alahanga* in the island has its connections to the sea. Every *alahanga,* as a political and social institution, has on land a *toohi* (men's house) and, by the sea, a *taoha* (canoe house). In addition to the *taoha*, each *alahanga* has a *maalitawa* (passage to the sea). This is one of the reasons that it would be difficult to create an entirely new *alahanga* in Ulawa: these traditional houses are undergirded by spiritual foundations. Thus, each *alahanga* in Ulawa island has a deity of the land and a deity of the sea. This is one of the ideas contained in the metaphor of the *complete(d) house*. As indicated earlier, Ulawa Island is a patrilineal society. This is reflected in the fish metaphor.

Thirdly, the metaphor of the fish represents the idea of continuity as embodied in the expression used for the practice of primogeniture in *alahanga*. Just as the fish species continues to live on through regeneration, so the *alahanga,* as a practice and as an institution, also lives on through continuity. In other words, in Ulawa the *alahanga* is *si'e suu* (never ending). It continues *oli mala i'e* (to live on), just as the fish do, spawning at the right season and continuing to replenish the stock and maintain the species itself. The idea of the *alahanga* renewing and replenishing itself, just as do fish, has caused some rifts in some clans in the island. In instances where, for whatever reason, the person who should take over a chieftainship is unable to do so, another member of the *alahanga,* usually an able bodied male, will request the role of caretaker. Over time, a caretaker and his children might be tempted to try to usurp the position, assuming it as their natural and legitimate right. It is, however, by no means a simple matter to deny the

rightful persons their proper inheritance since everyone in the extended family knows who has the right to become the next *alaha* in each *alahanga:* genealogies do not lie. In each *alahanga,* there is not only the *alaha,* but also his *popotana* (assistant). The assistant is usually selected and agreed on by the elders in the *alahanga* on the basis of outstanding personal life skills and personality, competency in traditional knowledge, and general abilities.

At first sight, it may appear that the female element is absent from the fish metaphor. This is not the case. The female is implied in every aspect of the metaphor, and is embodied, in particular, in the idea of continuity. Unless there is 'rebirth', there can be no continuity in either the fish species or *alahanga*.

6.4.3 Earth oven: *ora*

The third metaphor referred to here, that of the *ora* (earth oven, derived from 'ora', the word for light), appears to be part of the social thought of only one *alahanga*, in the Island.[45]

Arona has a special place in Ulawa Island mythology and genealogy. It is located at the southern end of the island (the back-end of the house; the tail of the fish) and it has its own metaphoric conception of the island. People of Arona perceive the island of Ulawa in the form of an earth oven. Ulawa is surrounded mostly by a rugged coastline of volcanic rock. The metaphor of the island as an earth oven is, therefore, linked to the geography of the island. Just as the island is surrounded by volcanic rock, so the earth oven is ringed round by volcanic rocks in the form

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[45] Meffrey Awao, personal communication.

of either a circle or a square. The oven is the space and site for cooking food; before the introduction of pots and pans, the earth oven was also the place where the fire was stored. In traditional Ulawa Island architecture (where houses were situated on the ground rather than, as is common today, on stilts), the *ora* was located at the back end of the house, the house being divided into two areas, the front end (used mainly by the husband and for entertaining guests and visitors), and the back end (used mainly by the wife, and including an area for cooking).

These traditional, indigenous metaphors resemble, in some ways, the common European conception of Nature as a life force, a type of guardian of the social order. However, whereas the European notion of Nature is based on the presumption of universal relevance and applicability, the Ulawa Island metaphors to which reference has been made are strictly local. As such, they are indicative of the very local and specific nature of the way in which Ulawa islanders conceptualise their world and, by extension, conceptualise the notion of development.

6.5   Contemporary society

In *Chapter 4*, Solomon Islands society was described as a nation of *wantoks*, the general structure of Solomon Islands society being characterised by *kastom*, church, and the modern state or government. Through the Constitution, the State defines Solomon Islands society as a political (rather than socio-cultural) entity. Thus, when considered in the context of the history of the evolution of the state, development can be seen as being largely a political phenomenon and bureaucratic process (see *Chapter 5*). In contrast, Ulawa Island society could be said to be a social, political, cultural and religious entity. This holistic nature of

Ulawa Island society can be represented by the metaphor of a *complete(d) house*. Development discourse has, therefore, for Ulawa islanders, an important cultural dimension. Even so, the wider forces that have determined and defined Solomon Islands society have also been at work in Ulawa.

6.5.1 *Kastom*

The basis of Ulawa Island society is *kastom* or *tolaha(ka)* (Ulawa Island culture) and the *alahanga* are at the root of Ulawa *kastom*. These *alahanga* are located in certain regions throughout the island.

Ulawa Island as a whole is divided into fourteen different geographical regions. Some of these regions, but not all, are characterized by a main settlement centre or village. Many of these village settlements are the consequence of the arrival of Christianity where people were gathered together in one large village, usually along the coast, the church building becoming the focal point of the village. In some villages, a mission school was built as well. In recent years, especially in the 1980s, people have begun to return to their ancestral homes and to revive their traditional villages and settlements. The extent to which this reverse migration can be described as part of a renaissance of traditional culture is not clear. Even so, it does provide some indication of the fact that *kastom* does indeed underpin Ulawa Island society even today.

While there is a reverse migration in settlement patterns, those who choose to remain in the main villages do so also within a settlement structure based on the *alahanga*. For example, in the village of Su'uholo on the eastern side of the island (where I come from), six different *alahanga* live and make up the village of

Su'uholo. To a casual visitor, Su'uholo may appear to be one large village, but every house in the village is, in fact, located in its own *alahanga's* geographical or physical space. In the large villages, such as Su'uholo, each of the *alahanga* is referred to in the metaphor of a canoe, *iola laku*. Thus, each *alahanga* is understood as a distinct canoe or entity which is part of the fleet of canoes that make up the village of Su'uholo. In traditional discourse, Su'uholo village, as a fleet of canoes, is known as *tala ni kaula* (path of the frigate bird). You do not normally use the name in ordinary, everyday conversation but it comes up on special occasions such as the traditional feast, *houla*. As well, each *alahanga* has its own traditional name. Because each *alahanga* has its geographical space within the village locality, people cannot choose to build their houses wherever they want. Each individual must live within the boundary of the appropriate *alahanga*. Just as the *alahanga* is thought of as a separate canoe, so the members of an *alahanga* are thought of as travellers in that canoe. Just as there are sitting arrangements in a canoe, so too, in terms of rank and file, there are clearly understood places and positions for all the members of the *alahanga*. The front two seats belong to the *alaha* (chief) and his *popotana* (assistant), while the rest of the male members rank according to age. Moreover, each canoe within a 'fleet' is also ranked according to how it is located within the village. In Su'uholo village, the *alahanga* closest to the sea is said to be in the front row, with the rest following in the order in which their *alahanga* is geographically located in the village. The very last *alahanga* (which also happens to be the furthest inland) is said to be *purine iola* (at the back of the canoe or fleet). Although this 'sitting' arrangement (front to back) is not, in other respects, indicative of a hierarchical relationship among the canoes, the members of the *alahanga* in the front of the

'fleet' are expected to play some leading role in the affairs of the village as a whole. This expectation is not mandatory; it is a kind of gentleman's agreement. If the 'front' *alaha* fails to exercise this leading role, any of the other *alaha* may carry out the leading role if they so wish. This often happens in consultation with the other *alaha* because there is no real seniority, they are all equals.

This equality of relationship among the different *alahanga* in the village, and by extension, the individual members of the village community, has important implications for village-wide activities. Because there is no overall village chief as such, people have to be enticed, not coerced, to participate in any village and communal undertaking, including development activities. Even so, every individual person in Ulawa belongs first and foremost to his or her *alahanga,* then to his or her village and, finally, to other institutions such as the church or state.

By way of example, I personally belong to an *alahanga* in Su'uholo village which is located in the middle. Therefore, in terms of the fleet or sitting arrangement by rows in the sense of the traditional canoe, my *alahanga* is in a middle row. The name of my *alahanga* is *Ahungakalo*, which means 'devil's wrapping or habitation'. Our ancestral deity is a shark and is called *Awao Poenjili*. My father, who was named after his grandfather, was named after our ancestral deity. My elder brother is also named after our deity.

Legend has it that *Awao Poenjili* was the eldest amongst the *walu Awao*, eight Awao brothers who used to live in the interior of the island, above Su'uholo village, in Lopo-i-Suuhau. After their home in the interior became uninhabitable,

they moved to the coast where *Awao Poenjili* and six of his brothers descended to the east coast of Ulawa. Their present day descendants, amongst others, live in Su'uholo village. One brother descended to the west coast of the island and his present day descendants live in *Mwaradja* village. His descendants also use the name *Awao*. As in the case of many other oral cultures, names represent memories, narratives, truths and realities.

Essentially, the *alahanga* is the inner core, the social and cultural heart of Ulawa Island society. It is the only inclusive indigenous institution to which everyone from Ulawa belongs and it is central to the Ulawa Island belief system, principles, values and practices. Recently, however, the *alahanga* in Ulawa have begun to be placed under enormous strain. Unless something is done quickly to strengthen the *alahanga* through some kind of formal state recognition of traditional chiefs, *alaha*, the essence of Ulawa Island society is at risk of losing its foundations and legitimacy, something that could prove catastrophic for Ulawa society. In the absence of a stable society, development activities are unlikely to have any significant effect.

6.5.2   Church(es)

The Church is a significant part of Solomon Islands society (see *Chapter 4*). Christianity was introduced to Ulawa by an Anglican missionary, Clement Marau. Clement Marau, originally from the Torres and Banks Islands of northern Vanuatu, was, like many other young men from the islands of Melanesia, taken by the Anglican Church missionaries to Norfolk Island where he was educated and trained as a missionary. While at Norfolk Island, he befriended Walter Waaro who was from Mwadjoa village in Ulawa. When their stay in Norfolk Island was

over, Walter Waaro persuaded his ni-Vanuatu friend to accompany him to Ulawa. In Ulawa, Christianity was first introduced to Mwadjoa village and Clement Marau set up the first mission school at Su'utaluhie near Mwadjoa. Later on, the second village in Ulawa to be Christianised by the Anglican Church was Su'uholo village in the east. Subsequently, the Anglican Church spread throughout Ulawa Island. In 1849, however, the Roman Catholic Church also came to Ulawa, the majority of its adherents now living in villages along the northeast coast. In the 1980s and, in particular, the 1990s, new religious movements arrived in Ulawa, especially Pentecostal Christian Churches. In many instances, these new religious movements came to Ulawa at the invitation of someone from the island who had converted to the new church either in Honiara or in another area of the Solomons.

The largest Christian churches in Ulawa island are the Anglican (Church of Melanesia), Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventists, listed chronologically in the order in which they arrived on the island as well as in terms of adherents, from the largest to the smallest. Besides these three major churches, there are other minor Christian churches whose numbers are less significant. These include the Christian Outreach Centre (COC), Rhema, and South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC). The Bahai Faith also arrived quite recently, but has not yet been able to establish itself in the island. Ulawa Island today could be described as almost one hundred per cent Christian.

So what are the major issues associated with the fact that almost all Ulawa islanders today are affiliated to a Christian church?

The two oldest and largest Christian churches, Church of Melanesia and Roman Catholic, are quite open-minded about *kastom,* generally respecting it and having a receptive attitude towards traditional practices. On the other hand, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, along with the other Christian churches, has tended to view *kastom* in a more negative light, associating it with paganism, and seeing it as backward and antithetical to modernisation. Indeed, they seem to be more concerned with personal hygiene, appearance and physical wellbeing than with spirituality. Commonly practised activities such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and chewing betel nut are considered to be not only unhygienic and unclean but also sinful. Seventh Day Adventist followers, as their doctrine demands, no longer fish or work in their gardens on Saturdays along with everyone else. Some follow the doctrine to the extent of not raising pigs or producing yams at all, considering such activities to be 'un-spiritual'. This is because yams, taro and pork are the ceremonial food for the *houlaa*, (*kastom* feast).[46] Foregoing the planting of yams and taro and the raising of pigs means that one cannot participate in a *houlaa.* Given the cultural significance of *houlaa,* the potential for tension and conflict involving families and, indeed, whole villages and communities, is evident.

The negative attitudes which the more recently introduced Christian churches hold towards *kastom* undermine – directly and indirectly – the traditional basis of Ulawa Island society. Incredibly, this is an issue that many people in Ulawa seem not to be aware of. Indeed, some of these new Christian churches are headed by converted *alaha* (chiefs). In Ulawa, an *alaha* cannot force members of his *alahanga* to join him and/or his immediate family in a new faith. Thus, the arrival

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[46] Although kumara is the stable diet, it is not used as ceremonial food in the *houlaa*.

of new Christian churches has led not only to competition for members, but, more significantly, to the gradual undermining of the basis of Ulawa Island society, the *alahanga*. A symptom of this is the now commonly heard complaint that people, young people in particular, no longer respect the *alaha* and elders in their villages and communities. Indeed, in 2003, following the arrival of RAMSI in Solomon Islands, some concerned islanders noted that perhaps it was time to have a Police Post on the island. This is a clear sign of the changes that have resulted from the undermining of *kastom*.

When Christianity first arrived in Ulawa, it did much to pacify the islanders and end traditional feuding and animosity. It acted as a unifying force. Today, however, the Christian Church has become a divisive and destabilising force.

6.5.3 Modern state structures

Historically, Ulawa Island existed as a separate political entity, the Ulawa Island Council, under the British colonial government. In the broader administrative structure of the protectorate, though, it was part of the Eastern District. The Eastern District had as its headquarters at Kira Kira in Makira but also included, apart from Makira Island itself, Ugi, Three Sisters, Ulawa, Santa Ana, Santa Catalina and the eastern outer islands. The eastern outer islands included Santa Cruz, Reef Islands, Utupua, Vanikoro, Anuta and Tikopia. However, during the reform programme, Plan of Operation 1974-77 (cited in Awao, n.d.), Ulawa was amalgamated with the Makira Island Council (Awao, n.d.). At that time, Ulawa Island was given the choice of joining either Malaita or Makira. The political leaders, traditional elders and chiefs of Ulawa, chose, subject to two conditions, to join Makira. The first condition was that the name of Ulawa should be included

in the council's name, the new political entity being referred to as Makira/Ulawa Council (rather than Makira Council as had been the case). The second condition was that Ulawa Island should have political representation at both Council and, later, provincial government level, as well as at a national parliamentary level. Having gained both these concessions from Makira, Ulawa Island became part of the former Makira Council, now the Makira/Ulawa Provincial Government. Of the eighteen wards that together constitute the political constituency of the Makira/Ulawa Provincial Government Assembly, three are from Ulawa. These provincial government assembly seats are known as Wards 1, 2 and 3. Each of these seats is contested every four years.

At the national or parliamentary level, Ulawa Island joins Ugi in forming the Ulawa/Ugi Constituency. This is one of fifty constituencies nationwide. Thus, through the national constituency, both Ulawa and Ugi are directly represented in the national parliament of Solomon Islands. The current Governor-General of Solomon Islands, Sir Nathaniel Waena[47], won the Ulawa/Ugi constituency for the third time in a row during the general elections of December 2001, becoming only the third person (all three from Ulawa) to hold the parliamentary seat since independence. Upon assuming the vice-regal post, Waena was replaced in a bye-election in 2004 by James Tora who comes from Ugi and was Minister of National Unity and Reconciliation in the Kemakeza government that was in power from December 2001 to March 2006.

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[47] Sir Waena has been GG of Solomon Islands since 7 July 2004.

From a development point of view, having direct political representation in the national parliament is a huge bonus. In fact, much of the development infrastructure in Ulawa (the road, wharf, secondary school, clinic and copra buying point) was largely due to the efforts of Waena when he was the Ulawa/Ugi Member of Parliament. As a former senior civil servant – Permanent Secretary in various government ministries – he was familiar with the way in which the bureaucracy operated and was able use this knowledge, along with stints as a Cabinet Minister, over many years to secure development projects for Ulawa Island. In fact, believing that he had already done enough for Ulawa in his previous two terms, he intended to use his third term in parliament to seek development projects specifically for Ugi Island. Although Waena was replaced, the fact that he was replaced by someone from Ugi, led many constituents to believe, especially those from Ugi, that Waena's intentions for his third term will be fulfilled notwithstanding his replacement. However, since winning the bye-election in 2004 and having been returned to Parliament in the 5 April 2006 general elections, James Tora has yet to fulfil the development intentions envisaged by Waena for Ugi island. Whether or not Tora will eventually do that during his second term in parliament remains to be seen.

Perhaps one of the biggest advantages Ulawa has gained by sharing the same constituency as Ugi is that it has access to the Constituency Development Fund, currently known as Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF). The RCDF is a sum of money allocated by the national/central government to each of the fifty constituencies nationwide for development projects. As the current member of parliament of the constituency, the national MP administers the fund, something

that leads to considerable controversy between Members of Parliament and their electorate. Some commentators argue that the way in which the money is allocated, and the manner in which it is dispensed, leaves much to be desired. In the case of Ulawa, the CDF has been used thus far for projects such as rural water supplies, church buildings, outboard motors and chainsaws, school fees and musical instruments for youth groups. In addition, many people receive individual help from the Member of Parliament for transportation and other miscellaneous expenses.

John Roughan[48], who regularly offers critical insights on government development policies and activities, especially regarding rural development, recently made this observation about the RCDF (Roughan, 20 July, 2005):

> From its first days in 1993, Solomon Islands parliamentarians were handed over SB$100,000 (US$13,580) supposedly for the needs of the people in a constituency.
>
> Over the years, however, as the fund increased to SB$400,000 (US$54,320) its major purpose of bringing development to people of the nation turned into a slush fund for everything and anything.
>
> The worst thing about the fund is not that it is abused, misused and causes serious social friction. Much more seriously, it has changed the nature of politics in the Solomons.

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[48] For example, here are just two of his numerous critical opinions: (1) *Opinion: The quick, easy fix*; (2) *Opinion: The dollar rules!* Both can be found in http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb/news/news_summary.asp.

It turned elected members from governing the nation to dispensers of funds. Our elected leaders, in the process, lost the understanding of their work.

Basically, the fund focused parliamentarians' attention away from their primary role as law makers to fill their time up as dispensers of funds for projects, school fees, ship fares, medical expenses, traditional feasts, and (sic) so forth.

It is sad to see and hear about so many Solomon Islanders hanging around their members' home, waiting for the handout, help in financial difficulty, hearing the good word on a submitted project, and such.

The typical MP's life is difficult enough trying to care for his immediate family than have more often than not, a dozen others from the constituency waiting at his home for a handout.

Much of today's criticism about the RCDF centres on the misuse of funds. But more importantly, many parliamentarians have lost their understanding that law making is their primary work.

That's the very reason why they have been voted into parliament. They are expected to study carefully proposed new legislation and to critically review national trends; to think about alternative ways of making the nation hum, to work out ways to better direct the country.

Their primary job is not to dispense money as if they were walking ATMs – Automatic Teller Machines.

Unfortunately, so much of the typical member's attention, energy and work are used up in working out, dispensing of and checking the RCDF.

As Roughan further observes, RCDF monies which should be allocated for "truly developmental purposes" are, instead, being used as a "slush fund for anything and everything". More importantly, as Roughan notes, the availability of the fund has distracted MPs from their proper role and functions. Instead of focusing on their primary role, that of legislation, they have been side-tracked into administering development funds. As Roughan observes, "boat's fare, medical prescription, school fee, traditional feast, donation, etc. do not qualify as developmental work but charity". I can vouch for this from personal experience.

However valid Roughan's criticisms of policy gone wrong are, the fact that the national government has centralised control over development policy and planning gives the process a semblance of order and coherence. So far as the RCDF is concerned, each constituency is given the same amount of money for the MP to administer to the electorate. This equal distribution of the fund may be contested since not all the fifty constituencies are of the same size, nor are their needs the same. Nevertheless, so far as Ulawa is concerned, it could be argued that the manner in which the policy is being implemented is influenced by *kastom* or culture.

It is important to distinguish between the political dimension of development at a national level and the cultural dimension of development at the constituency or rural area level. Thus, for example, when Waena was the MP for the Ulawa/Ugi constituency, in the national parliament of Solomon Islands, he was perceived as a national politician, a member of a political party (Alliance), and a cabinet minister of the Crown. However, so far as his relationship with his constituency is

concerned, he is regarded as a local. He was elected because of his credentials as a local. Thus, he is not only a *wantok* to his electorate, but a modern *alaha*. The relationship between an MP and his constituency may appear political and bureaucratic, but its essence is based on Ulawa Island *kastom*. Therefore, one of the defining characteristics the electorate looks for in those aspiring to be a Member of Parliament is whether they are attuned to *kastom*. Personality counts for more than work experience and academic qualifications. This is one reason why many candidates who have had a higher Western education have failed to unseat Waena in three consecutive national elections. Whether this will continue to be the case in the future, only time will tell. However, in the case of Nathaniel Waena before him and now James Tora (current MP for Ulawa/Ugi) the electorate simply did not 'know' the other candidates well enough either because they had not spent enough time travelling to, and living in, the islands (Ulawa and Ugi) for people to know them, or they had tended to be seen as 'individualistic' in their lives away from the islands.

So, although Ulawa society may appear distant from the national government or modern state (located in Honiara on Guadalcanal), it is nevertheless the case that national government exerts considerable influence over rural Ulawa Island society through the RCDF. The nuances of the relationship, conceived in the context of development, can be understood through the relationship between the constituency and its elected Member of Parliament, a relationship which is underpinned by important cultural principles and values. Thus, the modern state operates as an outer husk to the inner core, which is *kastom*.

6.6   Development activities in Ulawa

For purposes of convenience, development activities in Ulawa are be sub-divided here into two parts. The first part deals with development activities in Ulawa before independence, the second part deals with development activities after independence.

6.6.1   Before independence

The concept of development was introduced into Solomon Islands by the British. In fact, however, very little development activity took place in Ulawa during British rule apart from the building of a clinic at Hadja, which is still there today, and two boarding primary schools. Both schools catered for classes from cellar class (one class below class one) up to class seven[49]. One boarding primary school intended for the people on the western side of Ulawa Island was built at Warowaro (near Ripo village), the other, intended for those on the eastern side of Ulawa Island, was built in Arona. Neither of these schools now exists in its original location. The primary school at Warowaro has been relocated to Ripo village; the one at Arona has moved to Piru Piru and is now Ulawa's Community High School.

There is little oral evidence of the introduction of modern development to Ulawa apart from stories about the few Ulawa people who have had overseas adventures through 'Blackbirding'. One such story concerns a person from Ahia village who went to Queensland, Australia as an indentured labourer and returned with

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[49] In those early years, there was no kindergarten and so children went to school quite late. It was not unusual for children to start primary school (in Standard One) at either seven or eight years old, sometimes older.

nothing in his possession except a gun. The paucity of labour recruitment in Ulawa Island is due to the fact that labour recruiting boats hardly ever called at Ulawa, the other, larger islands like Malaita being more easily accessible.

The only other modern development activities in Ulawa Island have been Church-related. In particular, the first Christian missionary, Father Martin Marau of the Anglican Church in Mwadjo'a, was responsible for overseeing the building of the first permanent Church building in Ulawa (St Barnabas Church in Mwadjo'a village). The money used to buy materials for the roof of the building was collected through fundraising that was organised by Fr Martin Marau in Norfolk Island (see for example, Roger Neich (2001), Fig.3, pp. 11-12). For a long time, in Ulawa, the only buildings made of permanent material were the Anglican Church buildings and the Ulawa Island Council clinic at Hadja (referred to earlier). Also, through missionary work and activity, a few other people from Ulawa were able to move around and experience other parts of the Solomons.

Perhaps the event that had the most impact on the lives of Ulawa Island people was World War II. Because of the war, many people went to work in Lunga, Guadalcanal as labour corps for the Americans. Experiences both during and after the war gave people new perceptions of whites and Europeans and exposed them to Western goods. I remember, as I was growing up, seeing some of the utensils brought back by former members of labour corps. More importantly (see *Chapter 4*), the Maasina Rule movement was brought to Ulawa by those who went to Guadalcanal and became acquainted with the leaders and organisers of the

movement, most of whom were from Malaita. The centre of the Maasina Rule movement in Ulawa was in Su'uholo village.[50]

Ulawa islanders were affected both directly and indirectly by the aftermath of World War II. After the war, many Ulawa Islanders, mostly young men, went to work in coconut plantations located on other islands in the Solomons. In Su'uholo village, my father was one of the first few people to start planting a coconut plantation specifically for the production of copra. However, because of land limitations, the plot of land he cleared for coconuts was not sufficiently big. Nor was the soil good enough for coconuts. Although the family still use the coconuts planted by my father for copra, they now use it mainly for domestic consumption. Other people in Su'uholo village who followed my father into coconut plantation were more fortunate, some of them now making a reasonable amount of money from copra.

After the war, some people from Ulawa went to work in Honiara and other urban centres throughout the country, many of them attracted by the availability of formal education for their children. My own primary and secondary education took place in the 1970s and 1980s in Guadalcanal.

6.6.2 After independence

Modern development activities in Ulawa Island have been concerned largely with the implementation of national development policies formulated by central government with the assistance of provincial government organisations. In

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[50] Two of my late uncles were the main leaders: Raddock Tapo'oa (my father's cousin) and Luke Rohorua (my father's elder brother).

relation to the policy initiative encouraging indigenous Solomon Islanders to engage in private sector activities, many individuals and families in Ulawa have tried to engage in various business activities.

Today, in terms of modern development activities, there exist in Ulawa such things as coconut plantations and copra driers. In some of the villages, there are village cooperatives as well as village stores and bakeries owned by individual families or groups of families. An enterprising young man from Mwaradja village operates a successful vegetable garden. During the mid-1980s, there was a promising community cocoa project at Ahia village.[51] Unfortunately, however, as in the case of other ventures throughout the islands, it fell into disrepair after some years of operation. The issue of business failure in the island is one I have addressed elsewhere (Rohorua, 1996). Although many business ventures in Ulawa have failed, it remains the case that, in contrast to many other islands of the Solomons today, Ulawa is relatively well placed, having the physical infrastructure and community faculties and services discussed earlier. Recently, a small fishing industry has been established. So, too, has a weekly shipping service to the island from Honiara, a venture undertaken by an expatriate businessman who has connections with some people from Ripo village in Ulawa.

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[51] The cocoa project was initiated by one of my uncles (my mum's cousin) from Ahia village, Michael Harara Poropaine, who had been working for the government as an agriculture field extension officer in both Makira and Ulawa. Once he decided to start the cocoa project he resigned from the government. However, when the cocoa project failed due to constant internal bickering over the income generated by the project, Michael and his family moved from Ahia village, where they now reside in their ancestral homeland in Arona.

As is the case for other people in Solomon Islands, the lives of Ulawa Islanders continue to revolve around the three major institutions of State, Church and *Kastom*. Although, as in other rural areas of Solomon Islands, the State or national government has less direct effect than do the Church and *Kastom*, the idea of development nevertheless continues to ensure that the State has some presence in the minds of rural islanders, especially through the availability of the RDCF. Even so, *kastom*, continues to be the backbone of Ulawa society, just as it does elsewhere in rural Solomon Islands.

6.7   The concept of development in Ulawa

6.7.1   Common views of development

Certain experiences of development are shared by people in Ulawa and people in other parts of Solomon Islands. There are, therefore, some shared views about development. Thus, Kelloway (1998, p. 11) notes:

> Public officers and rural people revealed the presence of a consensus on what is viewed as development by rural people. Without exception, development is seen to be material in nature. It is related inevitably to cash and access to the things cash can be converted into.

This understanding of development in terms of cash or paper money should not come as a surprise. After all, the colonial administration that had introduced the idea of national development into Solomon Islands had also played a significant role in introducing the widespread use of cash money. So, for Solomon Islanders, development has always been associated, through the cost of labour, commodities, services and public infrastructure, with cash purchases as observed by Kelloway (1998, p. 11):

>While development is seen as roads, clinics and water supply, it is also seen as the ability to purchase consumables – in their wide variety. Training was not seen to be development. . . . [T]he educated voluntarily discerned the intangible dimensions of development, but typically as a second level of response.

The association of development with cash money and consumption is undoubtedly related to the direct experience of rural Solomon Islanders who live in a predominantly subsistence economy. In a subsistence economy, everyone is more or less self sufficient. There is, therefore, little incentive to save. Besides, since the technology to preserve consumable foods and commodities is not readily available, there is little sense of the value and use of paper money, something that is critical to a Western understanding of development especially in the context of a capitalist or market economy. How, then, does this relate to a specific Ulawa Island concept of development?

6.7.2   An Ulawa Island concept of development: *mwa'ora* or *mwaora'nga*

Although there are shared experiences and understandings of development among Ulawa Island and other places in Solomon Islands, the diversity of cultures points to the fact that there are also likely to be differences in the ways in which development is conceptualised in different areas. A concept of development that appears to be specific to Ulawa, one that is expressed in the words *mwa'ora* or *mwa'oranga,* is discussed below.

6.7.2.1 Linguistic entry and organic usage

Walter Ivens (1927), in an entry in his *Sa'a & Ulawa Dictionary,* defines *mwa'ora* as follows: "mwa'ora v.i., to run, of vines" (p. 212). This brief entry

captures only one use of the word in Ulawa. *Mwa'ora* is also used to refer to healthy crops, particularly healthy root crops such as yams and taros. *Mwa'ora* does not have the same meaning as `*ine* (abundance, applied to root crops) or *hungu* (abundance, applied to fruits on fruit trees). *Mwa'ora* is applicable to all plants and vegetation, not just vines: it is applied to describe healthy growth and, only indirectly, and through implication, can it be said to apply (in a general organic sense) to an abundant harvest.

6.7.2.2 Shades of meaning

Like many other oral societies in the Pacific Islands, metaphor and rhetoric have a significant place in Ulawa Island culture, etiquette and social thought. Thus, the indigenous concept of development of Ulawa Island articulated here is perceived also as an essential part of their indigenous epistemology (Gegeo, 1994) and an important contribution to the repertoire of indigenous culture, social thought and knowledge.

Mwa'ora is a compound word which juxtaposes two contrary ideas. The second word, *ora,* means, in one context, *earth oven.* Its literal meaning is, however, 'light' (in the sense of a fire, or a lit fire). When a fire is alight and burning with flames leaping into the air that provide light to the areas around the fire or fireplace, it is said to be *ora*. The emphasis here is not so much on the heat given out by the fire, but on the light provided. So, both the lit fire and light that radiates from the fire are known as *ora*. This is why I suggested that *ora* in the sense of an earth oven (a place for cooking food with the use of fire), is merely a derivative of *ora* meaning *light* or a lit fire. The other uses of *ora,* uses which relate to the provision of light, refer to electricity and instruments such as torches

and lamps. However, light dispensed by the sun, sunlight, is referred to as *raa* or *raaraa*. This sense of light has religious connotations and is used only in metaphysial and religious contexts.

In contrast to *ora* (light or lit fire), is the word *mwa'a* (off, out or dead). As does *ora, mwa'a* has additional meanings. Streams and rivers which are running low or have dried up are referred to as *mwa'a* (empty). This sense of *mwa'a* is extended to include supplies of water or other liquid substances which are either running low or empty. In a metaphorical sense, *mwa'a* is also used to refer to a situation in which vital supplies of food or resources are low, cut off, or disrupted (either at the source or in the supply chain). So *mwa'a,* like *ora,* has different shades of meaning depending on the situation or context in which it is used. By and large, however, although these words are generally treated as opposites, their combination (in *mwa'ora* or *mwa'oranga*) signifies, at least in the context of Ulawa Island, something basic to human livelihood and existence.

6.7.2.3 Conceptual formulation

Development in Ulawea is described as *mwa'ora* or *mwa'oranga,* the meeting of light and its absence, the place where supplies (cut off or dried up) are replenished. Thus, in this context, *mwa'ora* or *mwa'oranga* mean *sustaining life* itself, something that, in the wider context of Ulawa Island and Solomon Islands society more generally, necessarily involves the collaboration of all aspects of contemporary society, namely, *kastom*, church and the modern state. In order to understand how development planning and processes could contribute most effectively to Ulawa Island, and to Solomon Islands more generally, it is necessary to fully appreciate the complementary roles of *kastom*, church and state

and the ways in which these complementary roles can contribute to the *sustenance of life*. Central to such an understanding is *mwa'ora* or *mwa'oranga* as an expression of the cultural (as opposed to political) dimension of development.

6.8   Implications

The concept of development in Ulawa discussed above refers simply to *sustaining life*. From a practical point of view, however, modern development activity inevitably involves the acquisition and use of paper money for trading and exchange purposes. Certainly, as Roughan (1986) argues from a radical, critical perspective, development must mean more than dollars and cents. Nevertheless, it is the dollars and cents that Solomon Islanders currently need in order to buy what they cannot produce and in order to support their efforts to establish businesses. In contemporary Solomon Islands, a subsistence economy cannot supply everything that is required to sustain life. Durable home materials, utensils, implements and garden tools have to be bought with dollars and cents. This is the predicament that modern Solomon Islanders, including those who live in rural areas, face. *Kastom* can provide certain things; the church and government services can supply others. However, not only the wants, but also the basic needs of rural Solomon Islanders are beyond what these institutions can afford. It therefore falls to individuals and families themselves to find ways of making up the deficit. Realistically, policy makers need to address the fundamental issue of how best to give Solomon Islanders, including rural Solomon Islanders such as those living in Ulawa, access to dollars and cents in a manner that respects their family values and supports their individual enterprise. In other words, the means by which Solomon Islanders can be enabled to make sufficient money to *sustain their individual, family and community lives* should be built into a policy

framework that is supported by the three fundamental pillars of Ulawa Island society specifically and Solomon Islands society more generally: *kastom*, church and the state or government.

Ulawa Island, indeed Solomon Islands generally, faces critical limits in relation to what can be added or taken on board. If there is too much development activity over too short a period of time, the *complete(d) house* may collapse, the *canoe* may overturn. Essentially, at this point in time, development in Ulawa specifically, and in Solomon Islands generally, should be seen in terms of sustaining the life of individuals, families, communities and the country as a whole.

6.9   Overview

I have discussed Ulawa Island in terms of its indigenous concept of development and its development experiences. I have not, however, claimed that there is any sense in which this represents an 'ideal' case study. Ulawa, like other areas of the Solomon Islands, has its own identity, its own unique ways of being. It is, however, different from many other areas of the Solomon Islands in that it is relatively culturally and linguistically homogeneous. This relative cultural and linguistic homogeneity means that it can be treated, for the purposes of this research project, as a single entity, something that would not be possible in the case of many other areas of the Solomon Islands. Ulawa is, furthermore, the island on which I was born and spent my early years. It is therefore a place with which I am very familiar. For these reasons, and because my aim here is to illustrate some of the many ways in which development is conceptualised by Solomon Islanders (particularly by rural-dwelling Solomon Islanders), Ulawa

Island provides a convenient location for a case study. It is important, however, to stress that I am not claiming any special status for Ulawa in relation to the study of development in the Solomon Islands. The discussion of concepts of development in Ulawa and of the Ulawan experience of development are intended simply as examples of the ways in which rural-dwelling Solomon Islanders' concepts of development and experiences of development activities may differ fundamentally from those that are highlighted in much of the literature on development theory and practice. Even so, there *are* some areas in which Ulawa might be said to be typical of other areas of the Solomon Islands. In particular, it shares one of the important characteristics of Solomon Islands society nationwide in that *kastom*, church and state all play important roles.

As noted earlier (*6.5.2*), Ulawa Island is almost one-hundred percent Christian. The main denominations are Anglican, Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist, only a few islanders belonging to other denominations, including the more evangelical and Pentecostal ones. As for the presence of the state or government in Ulawa, this exists at three different levels. At the national level, Ulawa Island and Ugi make up a single constituency (Ulawa/Ugi Constituency) which is represented in the national parliament by a single Member of Parliament (elected every four years). At the regional level, Ulawa is part of one of the eighteen provinces – the Makira/Ulawa Province – and is divided into three Wards, each one electing three members to the provincial assembly. Members of the provincial assembly have to work within the bounds of an allocation of funding to the provincial government from central government. Unlike national MPs, they do not have access to a development fund designated for their own

Ward or electorate. At the local level, Ulawa Island has an area council with its headquarters (currently located in Hadja near Ripo Village on the western side of Ulawa).[52] The operational funds available to area councils are determined by central government and channelled through provincial government. Thus, funding in the Solomon Islands is, like the development agenda itself, largely top-down, driven primarily by the national or central government headquartered in Honiara.

In common with Solomon Islands society more generally, the third element of Ulawa society is *kastom*. In examining Ulawa Island society, I use a number of metaphors – the house, the fish, the oven, the island and the canoe. It is possible to relate these metaphors to Solomon Islands society more generally. The island metaphor has already been discussed extensively in *Chapter 1*. I shall refer here to the metaphors of house, canoe, fish and oven.

The concept of the *complete(d)* house referred to in discussions of Ulawa Island can be related to the wider concept of autonomy. As noted in *Chapter 4 (4.8.3),* concepts of *kastom* and autonomy are inter-related, something that has contributed to the fact that *kastom* has been used, particularly by the people of Malaita, as a rallying cry for opposition to central authority and control. Whether or not *kastom* is used in this specific sense, it necessarily involves a type of community identity which can conflict with those broader notions of identity that characterise national governments.

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[52] It has been suggested that the area council headquarters should be relocated to Kelimei at the northern end of Ulawa but this suggestion has not yet been acted on.

Another metaphor discussed in relation to Ulawa Island society is that of the canoe. A canoe is characterised by finitude, containment and accountability. How individuals and groups conduct themselves in a canoe is critical to the survival of others. A canoe is readily overturned, even in fine weather. Any disagreement represents a threat not only to the well-being, but also to the survival of others. Harmony and respect are, therefore, fundamental. Extending *kastom*-based concepts of harmony and respect to society as a whole is a challenge faced by all Solomon Islanders.

The metaphors of fish and oven both relate to resources and sustenance. The fact that the resources (including natural resources) available in small island communities are limited and the fact that they are often communally owned means that they must be cared for and used sensibly. However, there is a growing tendency in Ulawa, as I know from personal experience, for people – families in particular – to fight over commonly owned resources. This is a tendency that is also growing in the Solomon Islands more generally. It is therefore important that people in Ulawa, and in other areas of the Solomon Islands, reflect on the important role that caring and sharing, respecting the space and place of others, play in *kastom*. The people of Ulawa should also reflect on one of their common sayings: "If you do not weep for your brother, who will?" Both in Ulawa in particular and in the Solomon Islands more generally, it is important to bear in mind that resources are limited and that people depend on one another. An important aspect of *kastom*, both in Ulawa Island and in other parts of the Solomons, is ensuring that there is place and space for everyone and that everyone

(whether they live on the coast or the interior) has access to what they need to survive and prosper. This needs to be reinforced at both local and national levels.

What a consideration of Ulawa Island reveals, something that is also applicable to the country more generally, is that national development efforts should be aimed at sustaining the people in a way that is culturally appropriate, not at meeting criteria and standards that have been established elsewhere. *Mwa'ora* or *mwa'oranga* (sustaining life) is a cultural dimension of development that has emerged in the context of a subsistence economy. If development activities are to have real meaning in people's lives, they must be conducted in ways that make sense within the cultural context in which these people operate. The case for an institutional framework which upholds the three important pillars of Ulawa Island (and of Solomon Islands society more generally) - *kastom*, church and state - is discussed further below under the heading of State Reform.

6.10 State reform: Introduction

The issue of state reform is one of considerable interest and significance in Solomon Islands. The National Parliament was expected to debate the State Reform Bill in August 2004 (see *Chapter 1*). That debate was deferred until 2005. However, that debate had not taken place in parliament prior to the 5 April 2006 national general elections. Discussion of state reform in Solomon Islands is however, not new. Just before independence, the Western Province of Solomon Islands (which at the time also included the island of Choiseul), was threatening to break away from the rest of the country (Paia, 2003). On Guadalcanal too there was talk of breaking away from the rest of the country at independence (Kabutaulaka, 1999). However, much of the earlier debate surrounding state

reform revolved around the perception that the country was not prepared for political independence. The issue of how best to distribute the wealth generated by the national economy after independence had not been sufficiently clarified. These were then, and still are, some of the important issues surrounding state reform.

On the whole, although the need for state reform is not disputed, there is considerable controversy over what form the new state of Solomon Islands should take, some form of federal state system being generally preferred over other options. However, the cost of running a federal state system appears to have always been of particular concern. It is, in fact, a major stumbling block to the introduction of such a system. Thus, although governments have always acknowledged the importance of state reform, they have to date been unable, or unwilling, to make any firm commitment to substantive change, except to the extent of making amendments to the existing provincial system of government which was an adaptation of the provincial government system adopted by Papua New Guinea at its time of independence in 1975.

The current impetus for state reform arises from the perception that the ethnic conflict of December 1989 could have been better addressed through a federal state system of government and that, in fact, that conflict may actually have arisen, in part at least, as a result of earlier failures to address adequately the need for state reform. Whether or not this is the case, controversy over which system of federal state government is best suited to Solomon Islands remains. I discuss

below a proposed model of state reform in Solomon Islands, tentatively referred to as a *Wantok State System.*

6.11 State reform and development

Development is an ongoing process that is fundamental to human existence itself. So far as it relates to national development policy and planning, development in Solomon Islands has been described here as assuming political and bureaucratic characteristics (*Chapter 5*). However, so far as Ulawa Islanders are concerned, development was discussed in cultural terms (preceding discussion). Thus, there are different dimensions of development at different levels of society. This very fact can lead to contradictory and conflicting outcomes. Therefore, an attempt is made here, in the context of a discussion of state reform, to reconcile the differences between development at a national level and development at a local level.

As noted earlier, state reform, like development, has been a recurring theme in Solomon Islands. Why, then is it an issue that was not tackled at the time of political independence? The usual response to this is that the country could ill afford the exercise. State reform would require substantial resources, financial and human, and, therefore, could not be contemplated in the short to medium term. Moreover, the fact that the country depended to such an extent on foreign aid meant that it was even more difficult to contemplate the investment required in the short to medium term. On the other hand, state reform as a long-term option is unlikely unless moves are made in the short to medium term to facilitate it.

Following independence, the new nation of Solomon Islands needed to take its place in the regional and international arena amongst the family of nations as well as attending to domestic issues and, as Sanga (2001) notes, international relations tended to take precedence over such important domestic issues as rural development. In such a context, it was probably inevitable that the issue of state reform would be deferred. Even so, an equally significant barrier to state reform is what appears to amount to a mental blockage about the status quo, the provincial government system. Furthermore, politicians, both national and provincial, stand to lose a great deal in the context of a state reform process and they are in a powerful position when it comes to blocking effective decision-making on the issue (see discussion above of Roughan's (2005) critique of the RDCF). In connection with this, it is interesting to note that a high level government official has expressed the view that national leaders lack the skills necessary to deal realistically with the country's problems.[53] He also observed that although there are those outside of government, especially on the opposition benches in parliament, with the necessary skills, talents and abilities, they are not inclined to take the risks involved in playing a leadership role in this area while they lack the power to ensure that changes actually happen. He also stated his belief that there were too few people involved in the upper levels of government bureaucracy with the innovative capacities required to assist politicians in this area, one reason for this being that the requirement to have regional representation from different parts of the country at the top levels of public service meant that local support, rather than ability and merit, could play a significant role in selection. In addition, his view was that many national leaders, especially those in

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[53] Personal communication, 22 November 2002

the government's parliamentary back benches, have compromised their leadership credibility to such an extent that they are no longer in a position to provide effective endorsement for state reform. In such a context, it is unlikely that the issue of state reform can be addressed adequately in the near future.

Quite apart from the issues referred to above, there are issues relating to the wider social dimensions of Solomon Islands society that have an inhibiting effect on state reform. After all, whilst Solomon Islands as an independent sovereign country is a political entity, it is not a unified cultural and religious entity and there are cultural and religious issues (highlighted in this thesis) that necessarily impact on any attempt to engage in a state reform process (see *Chapter 4*). However, debate on state reform to date has generally focused on the political dimension, largely ignoring the realities of cultural and religious influences on peoples' lives. Regarding *kastom* or culture in the light of the diversity that exists in Solomon Islands, one public servant indicated to me that in his view many of the nation's political leaders pay lip service to the significance of *kastom*, but do not take it seriously as a factor that must be taken into account in shaping the nation.[54]

In seeking to establish a theoretical and conceptual basis for state reform in the discussion below, I consider the sociological foundations of contemporary Solomon Islands society.

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[54] Personal communication

6.12   Existing state structure

Solomon Islands is basically a unitary nation-state although it is structured politically into two broad layers. The first layer of government is known as the national or central government; the second layer, as the provincial government (or assemblies).

6.12.1 National/central government

The national and centralised government infrastructure is one inherited from the departing British colonialists. Today, it is represented by the national parliament which is a single chamber made up of fifty parliamentarians from the fifty constituencies nationwide. After the general elections every four years, a Prime Minister is elected by the members of parliament from amongst themselves. Although political parties play a role in the election of the prime minister, generally it is the individual's personality that is the deciding factor in election. One only has to look at the previous Prime Ministers to conclude that personality has played at least as significant a role in their selection as has competence and skills. Whoever is elected as Prime Minister has the opportunity to form the next government.[55] At this point, political parties play a much greater role, building alliances to ensure a government can be formed. As is the case in parliamentary democracies elsewhere, the opposition plays an important role. In Solomon Islands, however, both the Speaker and the Attorney-General are public officials who are not elected Members of Parliament. Should a serving Member of Parliament be elected as Speaker, that Member of Parliament resigns from his parliamentary seat and a bye-election is held to replace him. While the Speaker

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[55] Unless they are prevented from doing so by a process of popular revolt as was the case following the April 2006 election.

and the Governor-General are elected by the national parliament, the Attorney-General is appointed by the Judicial and Public Services Commissions.

As is the practice in any other parliamentary democracy, the government of the day is led by the Prime Minister and cabinet who lead the government bureaucracy of ministries, departments and statutory bodies. Independent of this are the judiciary and the Head of State, the Governor-General, who is the Queen of England's representative in Solomon Islands. In essence, then, what we have is a democratic nation state associated with a constitutional monarchy.

The main legal institution in relation to the maintenance of law and order nationwide is the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF). There is no standing army as such in Solomon Islands. However, the RSIPF has a small naval and surveillance unit which is used primarily for maritime surveillance and sea rescue operations. As well, the RSIPF has a bomb disposal unit which helps to detonate ordinances still left over from World War II. Besides that, there is a paramilitary unit known as the Police Field Force (PFF)[56] which was introduced in the 1980s to patrol the common border between Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea at the time of the Bougainville crisis. Paradoxically, during the height of the ethnic tensions in Solomon Islands, it was the PFF unit that overthrew the civilian government of Bartholomew Ulufa'alu in Honiara in June 2000.

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[56] The PFF has since been disbanded since RAMSI arrived in Solomon Islands in July 2003.

One of the arguments forwarded for state reform is the need to disperse the government machinery throughout the country so that even if one centre of government is disrupted (as happened in 2000), the remainder of the country can continue to function normally (Paia, 2003). In 2000, the entire country was crippled and held to ransom because of the break-down of law and order in Honiara and the rise in criminal activity that followed the fall of the legitimate government. Even today, it is a commonly held view that in spite of the best efforts of RAMSI, the underlying issues which gave rise to the ethnic conflict in 1998 have still not been addressed, as events in April 2006 demonstrated. Some people believe that one of the best ways of addressing those issues is to hasten the process of state reform. This is a particularly pressing issue in view of the fact that Rennell and Bellona have recently indicated the desire to secede from the rest of Solomon Islands, claiming that central government has been guilty of neglect of the area and of a failure to develop and implement appropriate development policies for the area (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC), 6 October 2005). In fact, in November 2000, three provinces openly expressed a desire to secede from the rest of Solomon Islands, becoming independent sovereign states (Paia, 2003). They, too, felt that they were not getting sufficient assistance from the central government of Solomon Islands. The three provinces concerned were Temotu, Makira/Ulawa, and Rennell and Bellona.

6.12.2 Provincial assemblies

As noted earlier, the provincial government system adopted at political independence was adapted from the provincial government system in nearby Papua New Guinea. However, it had much in common with the system of districts created by the British prior to independence. While the former districts

served the British well for administrative purposes, the underlying rationale for the establishment of district headquarters was a perceived need for continued pacification of the islanders. The administrative centres set up by the British became the basis for the new urban centres and headquarters of the provincial governments. However, the rationale for a provincial government system in independent Solomon Islands related primarily to a perceived need for decentralisation and devolution of political and economic power to the rural populace. The rationale for the provincial government structure may have been sound. However, in practice, centralised government is the order of the day. The provincial governments or assemblies have become mere extensions of the Ministry of Provincial Government, providing services to the rural population but, in all other respects, simply duplicating much of what the national government is doing. Being almost totally dependent upon the central government for funds, in the form of provincial grants which allow them to do their work, provincial governments were, and are, at the mercy of central government. Thus, where government is disrupted (as happened during the ethnic tension in 2000), the entire government machinery, including provincial governments, is starved of the resources necessary to continue service delivery. Furthermore, under such circumstances, the legal avenues required to exercise autonomous authority are significantly curtailed.

The allocation of provincial grants is one area of controversy that has led to pressure for state reform (Paia, 2003). Western Province and Guadalcanal, with some justification, believe that although they have been largely responsible for the development activities that have generated the country's economic wealth, they

have not received, and are not receiving, a fair return for their contribution. The present formula for provincial grants is based on population and Malaita Province, by far the biggest in terms of population, receives the largest proportion of grant allocations. Even so, its people believe that what they receive is insufficient to meet their needs. In fairness to Malaita Province, although it has not been involved in many major development activities, it does, nevertheless, supply the majority of Solomon Islands labour force. Thus, the proportion of women to men is 2:1 in Malaita Province, most of the men having gone to other islands in search of work and education. In fact, the people of Malaita could be described as amongst the most hardworking and enterprising of Solomon Islanders. Their contribution to the national wealth is through their human capital (see Bennett (1987)).

Currently there are nine provincial governments or assemblies in Solomon Islands. These are: Choiseul, Western, Ysabel, Malaita, Guadalcanal, Central Islands, Rennell and Bellona (Renbel), Makira/Ulawa, and Temotu provinces. With the addition of the Honiara City Council, there are altogether ten assemblies. Politically, each province, including Honiara, is divided into wards. After the provincial elections every four years, the elected members elect the Provincial Premier. Honiara, however, has a City Mayor who is elected from amongst the successful candidates after the Honiara City elections (also held every four years). To form the next executive or government in either the provinces or the City Council (in the case of Honiara), the provincial premiers and Honiara mayor, in turn, select from their own elected members those they trust and are able to work with. In many respects, in terms of the politics involved, the provincial

assemblies and Honiara city council merely reflect what goes on in the national parliament. Indeed, it is generally the case that those who miss out on election for national parliament eventually find themselves in the provincial assemblies or Honiara city council. Some of them are merely biding their time in the provincial assemblies, eagerly waiting to have another opportunity to join the national parliament.

On the whole, provincial governments and the Honiara City Council function in much the same way as does the national parliament, with personalities being more important that political party membership. They have their own bureaucracies, paralleling those of central government. Apart from the Honiara City Council (which has its own police constabulary to enforce the city bye-laws), the provinces are served by the RSIPF. Since much of the work done by provincial governments involves simply implementing decisions taken centrally, provincial governments have almost no influence on the general direction of development activities in the country.

6.12.3 Area councils/assemblies

During the 1980s and 90s, because of the pressure for state reform coming especially from the provinces, there was an attempt to further decentralise government power, authority, and decision-making. This involved an attempt to establish Area Councils or Assemblies and represented a recognition that, thus far, the government had been largely absent in the rural areas. It was a response to the complaint that the presence of national politicians in local areas was largely confined to campaign meetings prior to national elections.

There is a widely held belief in Solomon Islands that Members of Parliament have both the financial resources and the political clout to make things happen in their constituencies if they choose to do so. This belief is based on a general lack of understanding of the broader dynamics of parliamentary processes and procedures. The technicalities of parliamentary democracy are not fully understood by the electorate, nor, in some cases, by aspiring politicians. The result is that election promises are made that cannot be fulfilled. This leads to disillusionment and charges of corruption and selfishness. The fact that one third of parliamentarians generally find themselves out of office at each national general election does nothing to improve the situation.

On the whole, the idea of area assemblies is similar to that of Island Councils which had been established previously by the British prior to political independence. This was to be a third tier of government existing between the present provincial government and the rural populace. Unfortunately, the idea was put on hold because of the political instabilities in the 1990s. So far, it remains no more than an idea: it has not been developed to an extent that makes serious consideration possible.

6.13   Basis of state reform

State reform in Solomon Islands is a complex issue. Underlying the concept of state reform is that of re-formation, that is, restructuring in a way that is intended to bring about better outcomes. The call for state reform is therefore predicated on the belief that existing structures are deficient, something that will not necessarily have immediate appeal for those who benefit from these existing structures. This is particularly the case where what is being discussed is a

complete overhaul rather than fine-tuning. Furthermore, whilst state reform is essentially a political process, it inevitably has cultural dimensions.

As indicated earlier, recent ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands has exposed a gaping deficiency in the operation of the Solomon Islands system of government and, in doing so, has created a social and political climate that requires issues of state reform to be addressed sooner rather than later. However, since the malfunctioning of the state is, in part at least, attributable to the inadequacies of state officials, it follows that a reformation of state structures will not necessarily lead to significantly improved outcomes. Since a government system is merely an institutional mechanism to enhance and facilitate certain ideals, principles and practices, the best system, from a development perspective, is one that can, all other things being equal, deliver the best results for Solomon Islanders, including rural Solomon Islanders. Such a system will be one that is attuned to the political and cultural dimensions of development within the broad framework of an island society characterised by *kastom*, church and the modern state.

6.14 Churches and government

The tripartite conception of contemporary Solomon Islands society articulated in this thesis raises the question of the nature of the relationship between churches and government. In the state reform proposal outlined, the churches would provide, in terms of the betel nut metaphor to which reference has been made, the glue (the lime or *lif*) that binds *kastom* (the core of the betel nut) and state/ government (the husk of the betel nut). In order to do this, the churches would need to align themselves with *kastom* and with the goals of government. I believe that, so far as the major churches in the Solomon Islands are concerned, this

would not present a major stumbling block. After all, the majority of churches represented in the Solomon Islands are not in conflict with *kastom*. Furthermore, in peace and reconciliation initiatives relating to recent ethnic conflict between militants from Malaita and Guadalcanal, the churches played a very significant role. They continue to do so. So too does the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) which includes representatives from the major Christian churches in the Solomon Islands.

In discussing a possible three tier system of government, Nanau (2002, p.19) proposes the abolition of the Office of the Governor General and the establishment of a republic in which a new body, a Congress of Governors, would play an important role. Such a federal government structure would include provincial and local governments, the latter replacing existing Area Councils. Each level of government – federal, state, local – would have its own powers and a Congress of Governors would include "governors from all states, traditional leaders, and elder statesmen and women who are appointed by the president" (p. 19). The Congress of Governors would be equivalent to the Senate in a bicameral system such as that of Fiji or Vanuatu.

In the proposal for state reform outlined in *Chapter 6*, there would also be a need for a second house of parliament, one that would be more similar to the Senate in Fiji than to the Council of Chiefs in Vanuatu. In a two-tier government (one that has a national/central government and constituencies/`wantok' states), chiefs and traditional elders (representing *kastom*) would be placed in the second tier along with representatives of the major churches and of other important stakeholders

such as Non-Government Organizations, the business community and other ethnic groups. These representatives could be nominated by members of the first house of parliament (government and opposition) and ratified by the head of state (as is the practice in Fiji).[57] In particular, representatives of the major churches could be drawn from the membership of the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA).

6.15   *Kastom* and government

I referred earlier (*see 4.8.3*) to the fact that, in the context of contemporary societies, an essential aspect of *kastom* appears to be its implicit or explicit assertion of the right of indigenous peoples to autonomy, including their right to resist interference from any perceived threat in the form of a competing source of authority (whatever that competing source of authority may be). Keesing (1982) notes, for example, that the Kwaio Fadanga movement in Kwaio on Malaita, "was an imitation of, as well as reaction against, Waiparo's movement"[58], noting that the 'Are'are leaders of the Waiparo movement "apparently regarded the Kwaio to the north as violent and anarchic hill-billies – who could be persuaded to part with their valuables while enshrining 'Are'are culture as the canonical form of Malaita *kastom*" (Keesing, 1982, p. 63). Thus, the Kwaio Fadanga movement was, in part, a Kwaio response to the perceived cultural threat of 'Are'are.

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[57] The issue of whether the Office of Governor General should be retained or abolished is not directly addressed here since it would have no direct impact on the overall government structure proposed.

[58] The Waiparo movement originated from `Are'are who are also from Malaita. However, the people of 'Are'are live to the south of the people of Kwaio in the southern end of Malaita Island.

Cultural and ethnic rivalries are enduring realities in the Solomon Islands. Prior to the outbreak of violence on Guadalcanal in December 1998, a similar outbreak was narrowly averted in Makira/Ulawa province where the people of mainland Makira (the largest land mass and resource base in the province) felt that although they were contributing the most in terms of resources (including tax) towards the economy of the province and the country as a whole, they were receiving less in return than were people from the smaller islands in the province, especially Ulawa, Ugi and Santa Ana. Thus, for example, many of the top administration positions at the provincial headquarters in Kira Kira were held by people from Ulawa, Ugi or Santa Ana, who were often seconded from national or central government. When the provincial premier's position was lost to a person from Ulawa (who actually resided on mainland Makira), it was the last straw. Currently, tensions in the Makira/Ulawa province are being held in check. However, either these tensions, or similar tensions in other areas, represent an ongoing threat to stability. In fact, Meffrey Awao (personal communication) asked Rence Sore, then Director of Small Business in the Ministry of Commerce, Employment & Trade, to write a cabinet paper proposing the development of an international seaport facility in Selwyn Bay on Ugi Island. He did this because he believed that the people of Makira might take control of the Makira/Ulawa Province's resources and facilities (currently mainly located on Makira Island).[59] In such an event, the existence of a seaport facility on Ugi Island would provide the people of Ulawa and Ugi (who share the same constituency as the people of

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[59] Nathaniel Waena, a Government Minister at the time, was surprised not to have been consulted about a proposal relating to his own constituency, especially as he would normally have been responsible for introducing such a proposal.

Makira) with some protection in the form of a revenue generating infrastructure. Although the paper was approved in cabinet, the international seaport facility has not yet been built. Nor has a feasibility study been conducted. It is important, however, to note that this initiative represented an understanding of, and response to, the fact that intra-provincial conflict is a reality of life in Solomon Islands.

I have provided a number of examples of the relationship between *kastom* and resistance to any threat to autonomy. These remain relevant notwithstanding the fact that I use the term *kastom* throughout this thesis to refer to indigenous cultures as such rather than to refer to movements which have opposed state authority (local or colonial) because they have seen it as being inimical to indigenous cultures. The fact remains that *kastom,* in both senses, can represent a threat to national government. This is one of the reasons why I have suggested that there should be a special role for churches as the binding lime or *lif* in the government structure I have proposed (*see 6.14*).

6.16   Some underlying principles of state reform in Solomon Islands

In this section, five principles that are seen as fundamental to state reform in Solomon Islands are discussed. These are:

- the need to acknowledge the significance of cultural diversity within the context of national unity;
- the need to recognise that a constitution embodies the concept of the state in the form of a type of discourse (rational-legal discourse) that has little meaning for the majority of Solomon Islanders notwithstanding the fact that it is important that they should approve any recommendations made;

- account needs to be taken of the institutions that make up the civil service bureaucracy (the public sector) as well as the private sector churches, the non-government organizations, and society generally which are the tangible expression and manifestation of the sovereign state of Solomon Islands, gaining their formal authority and legitimacy through the state.[60]

- people in Solomon Islands (politicians, civil servants, beneficiaries of government systems) have contributed, directly or indirectly, intentionally or inadvertently, to the present failings of that system;

- the present state system, whatever changes have been made to it, is not a home grown one but a product of British Imperial design and simply converting the current nine provinces into states is unlikely to be an adequate response to a situation in which there is no common philosophy underlying that design.

Since independence, as was the case just prior to independence, national political discourse has been dominated by issues of legitimacy, irrespective of the changing circumstances and personnel. This is an issue that needs to be addressed by all Solomon Islanders. As David Gegeo has repeatedly stated, new ideas are needed if national leaders are to forge new visions and new missions for the nation and its people.

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[60] In the public service, for example, there is the General Orders (GO), and in the wider society, there are various other systems, practices, procedures and processes governed by different rules and regulations.

6.17   Home-grown solutions

6.17.1 A home grown system

In Solomon Islands, there is much talk of the need for a `home grown' system of government.   According to Nathaniel Waena (now Sir Nathaniel Waena, Governor General (2002)), a home grown system of state government is one that is tailor made for Solomon Islands.[61]   Such a system can be constructed only by Solomon Islanders themselves and must, if it is to be both effective and acceptable, be based on a proper understanding of Solomon Islands social, cultural, economic, political, historical and geographical context.   What is needed is something much more than a replacement of the existing provinces by states to form a federal system of state government.   Such a response would be little more than cosmetic.   A possible solution is outlined below, one that is based on the analysis of Solomon Islands situation here and in previous chapters and one that places the need for effective development at the centre.

Currently, provincial governments or assemblies do not enjoy significant sovereignty over land and sea resources.   These natural resources, necessary for production and hence development, continue to be in the hands of the rural dwellers in what is commonly termed 'customary ownership'.   This means that these owners of natural resources need to be empowered to exercise judicial, political, economic, cultural, social and administrative authority in a holistic way that reflects the ways of thinking of Solomon Islanders, including rural-dwelling

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[61] Personal communication.

Solomon Islanders. This empowerment must be perceived as relevant and must result in efficiency.

6.17.2 Relevance

A state system of government will be acceptable to Solomon Islanders only if it is perceived as being relevant to their particular situation. In order to be perceived as relevant, such a system must be responsive to the needs and interests of the majority of Solomon Islanders who live in rural areas. All Solomon Islanders, including rural dwelling Solomon Islanders, must see themselves as major players in any new system of government if it is to be seen as relevant. Such a system cannot be designed in such a way that it meets the needs of those who can read, write and travel and largely ignores all others.

6.17.3 Effectiveness

Any proposed model for state reform must be demonstrably effective. It must actually work.[62] This means that the following issues must be given careful consideration:

- Solomon Islands is an `islands' nation and the associated issues of communication and transport are especially important.
- Solomon Islands is a rural-based nation and the associated issues of literacy, formal education, physical infrastructure and social services are extremely significant.

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[62] Issues of cost are, of course, extremely significant but are not taken directly into account in this discussion which is intended to be largely conceptual.

- According to the latest population census, Solomon Islands is a young nation, something that has huge implications for the future.

- The latest statistics show that the vast majority of Solomon Islanders are Christians, something that has important implications for peoples' perceptions of what constitutes good governance.

- Currently, Solomon Islands has a subsistence economy which relies on marine and land-based resources rather than manufacturing and industry.

- Solomon Islands is a *kastom*-based nation in which oral cultures play a very important role.

- Solomon Islands is a distinctively diverse nation, but one which has a strong sense of affiliation and wholeness through the concept of *wantok* (see *Chapter 4*).

In addition to all of the above, Solomon Islands is part of sub-regional Melanesia and of the wider Pacific Islands region and must contend with the inescapable presence and dominance of both Australia and New Zealand as the major powers, for the time being at least, in the region.

At the global level, state reform must be sensitive to global trends in the fluctuating dynamics of global geo-politics and economic world order. Attention to existing global realities and global trends must be seen as an important consideration in the context of state reform.

In summary, any future state structure for Solomon Islands must be one that is responsive to local, national, regional, and global realities and trends and one that

Solomon Islanders themselves are comfortable with. Above all, it must not create a greater sense of unfamiliarity and uncertainty than is already the case. Bearing all this in mind, I believe what I refer to here as a `fifty-fifty proportionality' system would effectively underpin the notion of unity in diversity.

6.18   A 'fifty-fifty' proportionality system

Solomon Islands has a central government and fifty constituencies. These are the two parts of the equation. Currently, however, they are not in equilibrium. A critical question so far as state reform is concerned is how they can be brought into equilibrium. It is in consideration of this that I propose what I refer to as a 'fifty-fifty proportionality' system.

In a television programme broadcast in New Zealand in 2003, the head of the New Zealand Black Boats syndicate for the America's Cup race in Auckland (Schnackenberg) discussed what he referred to as a `fifty-fifty proportionality' principle in boat building (2003, TV NZ). This principle involved the equal distribution in mass and weight between the two major parts of the boat: the mast, sails and riggings on the one hand; the hull and rudder on the other. These two parts were designed to counterbalance one another so as to enhance the utility and the aesthetics of the boat. The idea of balance between two parts – not necessarily identical parts – underlies the `fifty-fifty proportionality' system that I propose for consideration here. According to Schnackenberg, the immediate challenge facing the designers of the Black Boats was to create an appropriate design within specified limits and parameters. These limits and parameters are clearly stipulated in the rules and regulations of the competition. However, in the actual design

process, the Black Boat designers also had to take into account the physical conditions, including the probable weather conditions, of the race course.

The Black Boat design team had many opportunities, in terms of time and money, to conceptualise and test various model designs before settling on the final design for the actual race. Solomon Islands has neither the luxury of controlled environments nor the time and money to experiment with different systems of state government. For this very reason, a fifty-fifty proportionality system, one that builds upon what is already in place, seems worthy of consideration. It would involve bringing the two existing parts of the federal system into equilibrium rather than replacing them with a provincial government structure. This can be described as a 'Federation of *Wantok* States' or alternatively, a '*Wantok State System*'.

6.19   Proposal: Federation of Wantok States

The Centralised-Constituency model is based on a fixed vertical point (such as in the case of a swinging pendulum) – a fixed foundation upon which a pyramid structure rests. The common philosophy or ideology is the fixed point which provides the legitimacy, the point of departure for the state apparatus.

The present constituencies provide a starting point. Instead of a three tier system involving area assemblies which has been proposed, this model is based on a two tier system, with central government in its current form dealing directly with the populace at the constituency rather than provincial government level. Such a model would represent a positive response to those who have suggested the addition of area assemblies to the current structure. However, it would be built

upon existing resource and landowning units in Solomon Islands and would, therefore, also represent a direct response to the peculiarities of Solomon Islands society.

In short, the basic building block for a new state system for Solomon Islands in the twenty-first century would be the land and resource owning units. This would shift political and economic power away from the provincial governments, which, in fact, are themselves neither land nor resource owning entities. Thus, the fixed vertical point would be that unity in diversity that is captured in the term '*wantok*'.

In such a state apparatus, each person in the country would belong to an operational social unit, a constituency, that constituency being a social, cultural, economic and political entity. Thus, the constituency would become the `new' state system of government in Solomon Islands. Constituencies could be structured in such a way that they would integrate the public and private sectors. People of all walks of life could contribute to their state in ways that are consistent with both the constitution and *kastom,* both of which would have to be fully legitimised by the church. In instances where differences may emerge between these three institutions, appropriate legislation should also be put in place to facilitate constructive dialogue for better understanding and cooperation between them.

The application of a `fifty-fifty' proportionality principle to a two-tier central and constituency state system would allow for an effective, rational interaction

between the two parts, neither having complete autonomy. Thus, central government would constitute one half of a bipartite system in which constituencies made up the other half. The role of members of parliament would, of course, change. Furthermore, Honiara City Council could be replaced by a structure that was organised along similar lines to other constituencies.

The call for the abolition of provincial government is not an entirely novel idea. Fraser (1995, pp.105-06) discusses a previous attempt to abolish the provincial government system:

> There has been one attempt to abolish provincial government and to replace it with a structure based on Area Councils. This arose out of a review of the provincial government system which was set up by the Kenilorea Government in 1986. The Minister responsible for the review was the Minister for Home Affairs and Provincial Government, Andrew Nori, a politician representing the West 'Are'are electorate of Malaita. He entered parliament as a member of the People's Alliance Party (PAP) which at the time was the main opposition party in parliament. Nori left PAP soon after and formed his own party, the Nationalists' Front for Progress (NPF). By then he was a (sic) outspoken critic of provincial government arguing for its abolition. The review committee reported in 1987 but Nori did not release the report. Instead he appointed a new in-house committee to examine its recommendations. This led to the preparation of the *Provincial Government Review White Paper* in which the main recommendation was that the system of provincial government established under the Provincial Government Act 1981, be abolished. It was proposed instead that the Area Councils should be upgraded and called Area Assemblies and that they become the second tier of government with legislative and policy making powers, and responsibility for services in their own area. . . .

The Provincial Government Review White Paper was tabled in the National Parliament and debated but that was as far as this attempt to abolish provincial government went. The proposal was put to a meeting of provincial premiers in August 1988. Only two provinces expressed a clear opinion about it. Western province opposed it, Malaita province supported it. Two provinces were not represented at the meeting, and the rest did not come out with a clear preference.

The call to replace Area Councils by Area Assemblies referred to above is different from the current recommendation, that is, that both Provincial Governments and Area Councils be abolished. Nevertheless, there are similarities. Why, then, should the current proposal be acceptable now when a similar proposal was not endorsed in 1988? I believe that there are two important factors involved. First, in 1988, only ten years after independence, a major political restructuring may have seemed premature. Secondly, in the period since 1988, the government has been repeatedly challenged about its failure, within the context of a provincial system, to address adequately issues of development policy and planning (especially as they relate to rural areas).

The proposal to abolish provincial governments and area councils is partly predicated on the success, or at least partial success, of a number of constituency-based initiatives or of initiatives which had important features in common with constituency-based initiatives. Some of these are outlined below.

Prior to political independence in 1978, the people of Ulawa who were working in Honiara, including my father, started an organization called Ulawa Community Development Fund (UCDF). The idea was to have a community fund which could

be used to implement community projects either in Ulawa or in Honiara. After political independence, Ugi was included in the organisation although the initials remained as UCDF. By the 1980s, this organization had begun to make some tangible progress, at least in Honiara. The community secured a housing loan from the Development Bank of Solomon Islands (DBSI)[63] and had two houses constructed in Vara Creek. These were meant to be rest houses for people from Ulawa and Ugi who, needing accommodation in Honiara could go to either of them. In fact, even while both houses were under construction, people from the two islands were already using the premises. In 1982, given the apparent success of the house building project, the community held a meeting in Honiara for people from Ulawa and Ugi. The purpose of that meeting was to reach agreement on another development project. At that time, the Solomon Islands government had decided to start up a new local tuna fishing company, the National Fishing Development (NFD)[64] Company Limited – a joint venture between the Solomon Islands government and the only other major local fishing company, Solomon Taiyo Limited.[65],[66] During the meeting, my elder brother, Henry Judah Awao, who was working for NFD, suggested that the community might like to consider getting a catcher boat to fish for tuna and selling the catch to Solomon Taiyo Ltd (which has a cannery factory), or to NFD (to sell on to Japan or Levuka in Fiji). One of the advantages of this proposal, my brother argued, was that many young

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[63] DBSI is no longer in operation.

[64] NFD is now a much smaller operation than when it was in the 1980s and 90s.

[65] Solomon Taiyo was a joint venture between a Japanese tuna fishing company and the Solomon Islands government. During the ethnic tensions in the late 1990s, the Japanese withdrew and now the company is solely owned locally by the national/central government of Solomon Islands and the Western Province.

[66] When Solomon Taiyo Limited relocated to Noro in the Western Province, NFD took over the shore and port facilities that Solomon Taiyo limited had left behind in Tulagi.

men from Ulawa were already working on catcher boats as deckhands, skippers or fishing masters. Finding a crew to operate a catcher would not therefore be difficult. Furthermore, some of the young men from Ulawa who were experienced fishermen had already moved from Solomon Taiyo Ltd to NFD.[67] At the community meeting in 1982, the majority did not favour the idea of a catcher boat. Instead, they voted for UCDF to charter a commercial boat to ferry inter-island cargo between Honiara and Ulawa and Ugi and other ports, especially in Small Malaita and Makira.

By the 1990s, both development initiatives had foundered. The two houses at Vara Creek were repossessed by DBSI for default on housing loan payments and the inter-island shipping venture had become unprofitable. There were rumours that the management team of the UCDF (overseeing both initiatives) had misused the money. To date, however, there have been no prosecutions. Wherever the problem may have lain, the important point here is that these projects demonstrate the existence of constituency-based community action. In fact, although some of the pioneers of UCDF, including my father, are no longer alive, the concept remains.

More recent developments in other constituencies also point to the viability of using the constituency as a central element in a reformed government structure. In discussing the development status of Ulawa Island in terms of the island's infrastructure and facilities (*Chapter 6*), I referred to the fact that the MP for

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[67] A number of years later, my brother became base manager for NFD at its shore base in Tulagi. He resigned early in 2000 when the company relocated to Noro in the Western Province.

Ulawa/Ugi, Nathaniel Waena, played an important role. Rumour has it that at one point the people of Small Malaita were so envious of what Nathaniel Waena had been able to achieve for the people of Ulawa that they intended to ask him to contest the Small Malaita constituency in the hope that he could be equally successful in gaining tangible developments for that constituency. During the 2001 general election, Waena indicated that this would be the last time (the third) that he would stand as MP for Ulawa and Ugi. He also indicated that, having focused on doing what he could for the people of Ulawa in his previous two terms in office, he intended to focus on developments in Ugi if he was reelected (see *6.5.3*). He won that election by a narrow margin, largely due to the support of the people of Ugi, many of those in Ulawa (where he was defeated) having deciding not to vote for him. When Waena became Governor-General in 2004, James Tora, from Ugi, was elected to parliament as his replacement in a by-election. Tora was later reelected in the national election in 2006. Whether James Tora will be able to achieve for Ugi anything equivalent to what Nathaniel Waena achieved for Ulawa remains to be seen. What really matters, so far as the discussion here is concerned, is the fact that Nathaniel Waena demonstrated, in his actions and in his stated intentions, that it is possible, as an MP in the Solomon Islands, not only to bring development benefits to constituents in rural areas, but also to attempt to do so in an even-handed way.

Ulawa Island is the second largest island in the Makira/Ulawa province. Even so, there is little evidence in Ulawa of development facilities or infrastructure that have been provided at a provincial level. Indeed, during my father's term of office as a provincial member of the Makira/Ulawa legislative assembly in the mid-1980s, the only really tangible amenity that I can recall having been provided

from provincial resources was a health aid post near Su'uholo village. That health aid post lasted only for as long as my father was a member of the legislative assembly. Furthermore, although water supply is one of the essential services for which provincial governments are responsible, neither Su'uholo itself nor our family village settlement outside Su'uholo village (called Mana'o) has a piped water supply in spite of the fact that my father was a provincial politician for four years and president of the Ulawa Island local court for a number of years. What this indicates is that, whatever the efforts of some of their members, province-based systems in Solomon Islands have difficulty (possibly because of competing interests) in delivering resources. So far as Ulawa is concerned, much that has occurred by way of development has come through the constituency and as a result of the actions of a national member of parliament.

It is, of course, not only in Ulawa/Ugi that constituency-based activities have been successful. There have also been successful constituency-based activities in other parts of the Solomon Islands. Perhaps one of the most interesting is the opening of the first ever constituency office in the Solomon Islands by Fred Fono, MP for Central Kwara'ae. In opening a constituency office in Auki, Malaita, Fred Fono provided an important point of contact between himself, as MP, and members of his electorate. He also demonstrated that it is possible to set up constituency-based structures that encourage constituents to become involved in a collective and collaborative way in constituency-based political action. Such initiatives could be even more effective in the context of the type of two-tiered political structure proposed here, a structure that could provide MPs with more opportunities than they currently have to work directly for the benefit of their constituents.

Another example of constituency-based action is the opening of a computer centre in his constituency by the Member of Parliament for East Honiara. Although one might have thought that responsibility for such an activity rested with Honiara City Council, the national MP's initiative in this respect is testament to the viability of using the constituency as the political infrastructure for a new Solomon Islands society.

Another example of constituency-based planning by a national MP, a particularly impressive example, is the recent announcement by the national MP for Malaita Outer Islands (i.e., the Polynesian outliers of Sikaiana and Ontong Java) that sixty-six families on the island of Sikaiana, an island on which there is at present no electricity, are to be provided with solar power. He has also indicated that he will follow this by attending to the power needs of the larger community in Ontong Java. What is notable, once again, is that this planning is taking place at constituency rather than provincial level. What is also notable is that the people of Sikaiana and Ontong Java, part of the Malaita Province, have received nothing in any way comparable as a result of the actions of provincial officials. The removal of the provincial layer of government would release more resources for operations at the constituency level. Since members of parliament, unlike most provincial officials, have to rely on their constituents for re-election, the way in which they made use of these resources would inevitably play an important role in their future prospects. In connection with this, it is important to note that the Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF), which is channeled through the constituency, has increased recently from $400,000.00 Solomon Islands dollars to $1million Solomon dollars (an increase of $600,000.00). This increase in funding

could usefully be accompanied by the setting up of administrative structures to facilitate rural development initiatives. This would have the advantage not only of ensuring that members of parliament had the necessary infrastructure to support their rural development plans and provide the necessary financial controls in relation to these plans, but also ensure that this level of planning did not occupy them to the extent that they could not attend fully to their other duties. Overall, it would help in the implementation of the type of bottom-up rural development approach to which the current Sogavare government has announced its commitment.[68] I believe that this type of approach would be even more likely to succeed in the context of the type of government structure proposed here, one that would, in placing more emphasis on constituency-based action, acknowledge the significance of the fact that the majority of Solomon Islanders dwell in rural areas. It would also represent an acknowledgment of the fact that the circumstances and life-styles (including *kastom*) of these rural dwellers differ from area to area and need to be taken fully into account in development planning.

Another advantage of a constituency-based system is that it would help to clarify issues relating to localised conflict. During the height of the ethnic tension on Guadalcanal (involving militants from Malaita and Guadalcanal), Harold Keke was represented in the media as being motivated by the grievances of the people

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[68] The Sogavare government has announced that by the end of February 2007 it will appoint suitable people into the public service to be posted out as Constituency Development Officers in all of the country's fifty constituencies. The role of the Constituency Development Officers will be to coordinate activities between the central and provincial governments and rural communities in the implementation of the Government's stated bottom-up, rural development approach (Government Communications Unit, Wednesday 10 January 2007 cited in http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb/news/News.asp?IDnews=7379).

of Guadalcanal (see *4.9*). However, although Harold Keke[69] may have claimed to have been championing the interests of Guadalcanal people, particularly in relation to issues relating to the land, the reality may have been very different. It is true that he is from the northern region of Guadalcanal (tasi-mate), where Honiara is also located. However, his mother is not from Guadalcanal but from Bougainville. Guadalcanal (in common with Ysabel, Choiseul and Western Province, and Bougainville) is a matrilineal society in which land is inherited through the female line. It is difficult, therefore, to see why Harold Keke, who has no direct involvement in land ownership in Guadalcanal, would have engaged in conflict in order to champion the interests of those with claims to land ownership in Guadalcanal. Furthermore, had he done so, he would not have been likely to have done so with the support of the people of Guadalcanal since he would not, in their view, have been able to do so legitimately. Furthermore, Keke and his henchmen were ruthless in their treatment of those people from the weather coast of Guadalcanal who did not share their militant approach to opposing the national government and the people of Malaita. At a constituency level, all of this would have been clearly understood; at provincial, national and international levels, it appears that it was not. Once again, this illustrates the importance of an understanding of *kastom* at a local level. In a constituency-centred system, this type of understanding would be likely to inform immediate responses to militant action which claimed a type of legitimacy that was not supported by *kastom*.

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[69] This was before he was arrested and imprisoned by the police after the arrival of RAMSI.

Thus far, I have suggested that the present fifty constituencies remain. However, it might be preferable to amalgamate some and to create some new ones. Individual constituencies would have ready access to central government and to other constituencies. Finally, such a system would be likely to be both relevant and efficient.

6.20　Overview

There are four important aspects of the preceding discussions that should be highlighted. First, state reform must be ideologically-based. Second, the technicalities of constitutional reform must link back to the ideological basis of state reform. Third, everyone, not only those who directly serve government, must benefit from state reform and constitutional reform. Finally, state reform and constitutional reform must represent an effective response to the perceived weaknesses of the current system, an important aspect of which is the current inadequacy of national development policy and planning.

In the final analysis, the institutional structure of the state must be considered in tandem with a conception of development thinking that would enhance development practice. It is, after all, people who make up the state and it is people who can make effective development happen. A real understanding of the social reality of Solomon Islands, of the ways in which people live their lives, must be fundamental to change. Central to this is the interaction of state reform and development practice.

Chapter 7

Overview and concluding statement

7.1   Overview

It is a commonly held view that the development problems characterising Solomon Islands are in large measure a consequence of the British colonial administration's lack of adequate preparation for political independence. In order to explore the extent to which that claim might be true, development processes and experiences in Solomon Islands in the period immediately preceding, and in the years following political independence in 1978 have been critically examined in the context of an exploration, from an insider's perspective and using a constructivist-interpretative paradigm, of political and social aspects of contemporary Solomon Islands society. In this critical examination, three metaphors ('island space', 'betel nut' and 'wantok') play a central role. The approach adopted was underpinned by a broad postmodernist theoretical framework but also included aspects of structuralism, being firmly contextually grounded in Solomon Islands and, in particular, in Ulawa Island.

A critical discussion and review of selected international literature on development sought to locate the philosophical and theoretical origins of the concept of development (with particular reference to what is often referred to as 'conventional' or 'mainstream' development theory). It was observed that the way in which ideas and belief systems develop in a general sense plays a significant role in their specific interpretation in local contexts in spite of the fact

that the cultures and economic circumstances specific to these contexts may be inconsistent with the general context in which these ideas and belief systems were initially developed.

Contemporary Solomon Islands society was described and discussed in terms of three aspects of Solomon Islands society which are considered to be critical to social and economic development: *kastom*, church and government. It was argued that an understanding of the roles that *kastom*, church and government play in contemporary Solomon Islands society should be considered fundamental to effective development policy and planning. It was suggested that the political dimension of development (planning for development at a national government level) needs to be brought into line with religious and cultural dimensions of society, one aspect of the cultural dimension being the ways in which development is conceived at a local level. An example of this was provided in a discussion of the *mwa'ora* or *mwa'oranga* development concept associated with Ulawa Island. It was also argued that state reform is likely to be required if development activities are to be effective and a federal *wantok* state system (based on existing national constituencies) was proposed as being more consistent with the realities and requirements of Solomon Islanders than is the current government system.

7.2 Conclusions

In development terms, the departing British colonialists did little to prepare the British Solomon Islands Protectorate for independence. Their last two development plans have no clear focus or direction. They are totally lacking in statistical information and analysis concerning the economic base of the country;

they include no measures by which the success (or otherwise) of the plans could be determined. They make little attempt to address problems of infrastructure and unequal distribution of resources and economic opportunities. They make no reference to the fact that many rural Solomon Islanders were progressively losing access to the land resources necessary to support themselves and their families. Above all, they take no account whatsoever of the realities of the society and culture of Solomon Islanders or of the ways in which they conceptualise development. Overall, it is clear that, following World War II, British attention was almost exclusively focused on rebuilding the economy and infrastructure at home. They were intent on removing themselves as quickly as possible from an area in which the people were becoming increasingly politicised, one in which resistance was spreading, one that offered no immediate prospect of economic or political gains. The negative consequences of colonisation, particularly in relation to the disruption of the subsistence-based economy of the islands and the failure to respond appropriately to that disruption, were becoming increasingly apparent. Even so, successive governments of independent Solomon Islands might have been expected to perform better than the British in terms of national development policy and planning. They did, after all, have the advantage of a more thorough understanding of the people, the society and the culture. That they have not done so appears, in large measure, to be due to the fact that they have simply followed the British approach, an approach that is based on an understanding of development that is inconsistent with the realities of a Pacific island-based society made up largely of rural dwellers for whom *kastom* and church are at least as significant as national government. The discussion of Solomon Islands society and culture provided here, along with the analysis of the concept of development

on one island (Ulawa Island), point to the fact that approaches to development that are derived from very different historical, geographical, political and social contexts are unlikely to be effective. Both in terms of the overall structuring of national government and in terms of development policy and planning, Solomon Islands clearly needs an approach that is based on local realities. Until this is fully understood, it seems unlikely that there will be any significant improvement in the lives of Solomon Islanders, particularly rural-dwelling Solomon Islanders. It is this argument that is, I believe, the central contribution that this thesis makes to debate about development policy and planning in Solomon Islands and, more generally, to debate about development policy and planning in 'island' nations more generally.

Development policy and planning involve making conscious choices and decisions. They involve taking advantage of existing opportunities and creating new ones in order to change people's lives for the better. Because they involve social change, they need to be viewed in the context of existing social structures and attitudes. What works at one time and in one context may not work at another time in the same context or at the same time in a different context. Thus, development is subjective and qualitative as well as quantitative. Extrapolating from the concept of development of Ulawa islanders, it could be said that development activity currently in Solomon Islands should focus on sustaining life. In these early years of the twenty-first century, sustaining life will inevitably, however, involve more than ensuring adequate food and water supplies and health services. If Solomon Islanders are to be active in determining the structure of national government and if they are to have a place in global society, they will

also require educational opportunities. Development planning and development activities in Solomon Islands need to start from a vision that is firmly rooted in local realities, one that emerges from the current aspirations of the people, not from a vision that is imposed from outside. It has been suggested here that this might be more readily achievable if the national government were to be restructured in a way that more adequately reflects the geographical, economic and social realities of the nation, one that could, for example, be based on a federal system of *wantok* states.

7.3 Weaknesses and limitations

The first limitation of this research project – the fact that it contains very little discussion of state reform – arises out of problems relating to social and political unrest in Solomon Islands at the time when fieldwork was planned. My original intention was to visit Solomon Islands on two separate occasions in order to conduct two series of semi-structured interviews – one series with those involved in national and regional politics, the other with people living in Ulawa Island. The first series of interviews – involving national and regional politicians – was to focus on the interaction between development and state reform; the second – involving Ulawa Islanders – was to focus on local people's understanding of development and their aspirations for development. In the event, only one visit to Solomon Islands was possible. That visit took place in November/December 2002. During that visit, it was possible to interview a number of Ulawa islanders and a few politicians. However, because that visit coincided with significant political and social unrest, politicians, many of whom were concerned about investigations into their activities and, ultimately, their own fate, appeared suspicious of someone who purported to be interested in state reform. They were

therefore reluctant to enter into discussions. I n the event, I was able to interview only a limited number of national leaders and politicians. I interviewed only one government minister and four senior civil servants. I also had the chance for a brief discussion with five other government officials but could not catch up with them later for further discussions. Nor was I able to schedule interviews with another five other government officials who had indicated they would be willing to meet with me for an interview. Ulawa Islanders, however, were more open to discussing development issues, but were clearly also concerned about entering into politically sensitive discussions. For that reason, I confined myself to interviewing a number of close family members and friends. These included my mother, three brothers (excluding Meffrey Awao), a brother-in-law, two uncles (one of them is from South Malaita), four cousins, a distant relative and three other Solomon Islands *wantoks* who are not from Ulawa Island. In view of the possible dangers that might arise, for myself and others, were my motives to be misunderstood or misrepresented, I decided to cancel my second visit. Although I felt that I had been able to gather sufficient information about the views of Ulawa Islanders in relation to development, I did not feel that I had been able to gather much useful information about the views of national and regional politicians on matters relating to state reform. For this reason, I decided to place less emphasis on state reform than I had originally intended.

A second limitation of the research project relates to what I perceive to be a somewhat uneasy balance between modern and post-modern perspectives. As a student of sociology, my primary interest initially was cultural and I was predisposed towards postmodernity in general and the ideas of Max Weber in

particular (see Rohorua (1996)), believing that a post-modern paradigm provided an effective framework for the engagement and explication of development in the specific context of Solomon Islands and, in particular, Ulawa Island. Examining development in the context of a range of locally relevant metaphors seemed to me to offer interesting possibilities. Even so, it became clear to me that a modernist perspective also had something important to offer, and that the study therefore needed to be firmly grounded in terms of the historical and economic realities that have shaped contemporary Solomon Islands. This approach appealed to me as a student of development studies whose ideas have been shaped, in part, by the radical Marxist perspective (Marx, 1970) which underpins dependency and underdevelopment theories and has provided a useful critique of modernisation theory without, however, proposing a plausible alternative development pathway for countries such as Solomon Islands. The result is that I have drawn upon two paradigms which are often seen as being mutually exclusive. It would have been interesting to explore the reasons why these paradigms appear to operate here in a complementary rather than contradictory way – with a radical Marxist approach providing a plausible explanation for the shortcomings of previous development activities in Solomon Islands and a poststructuralist approach offering a plausible way forward, one that may not be wholly inconsistent with post-development discourse.

7.4   Possibilities for future research

One focus of attention here has been on the way in which one group of Solomon Islanders, those living on Ulawa Island, view development. However, Solomon Islands as a nation is socially and culturally diverse and there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of that diversity and of its implications for

development activities. Further studies that focus on different groups within Solomon Islands and that look more closely at the role of the church (and the potential for the church to play a role in development) would provide useful input into development thinking.

The discussion of state reform in Solomon Islands that is provided here is not based on a detailed analysis of the shortcomings of the present system of national government in Solomon Islands. Nor is it underpinned by a study of those approaches to national government structuring that might be appropriate in the case of Pacific islands nations that are characterised by uneven development or by a detailed sampling of the views of those involved in national and regional politics and those affected by national and regional politics. Such a study could inform current discussions of state reform in Solomon Islands and, in doing so, could provide a further useful perspective on national development planning.

Finally, Solomon Islands as a nation is made up of peoples who inhabit a group of islands. Since the sixteenth century, both the islands themselves, and the peoples who inhabit them, have been affected by events elsewhere in the world which have impacted on them. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, they are inevitably a part of the phenomenon of globalisation. Although there is a need for development activities that focus on the day-to-day realities of life in Solomon Islands, there is also a need to acknowledge the fact that globalisation will continue to impact on the Solomon Islanders and to plan in a way that seeks to ensure that that impact is as positive as possible. Bearing this in mind, there is clearly a need for more historically focused studies of the political and social

development of Solomon Islands and of the impact of external forces on its peoples in the past and the likely impact of such forces in the future.

7.5   Final word

In August 2003, I took part in a seminar which focused on the Australian led mission to help restore law and order in Solomon Islands (RAMSI). I ended my presentation as follows:

> Despite extensive negative media coverage of Solomon Islands in relation to ethnic conflict and the perceived failure of government, both generally and in relation to development activities in particular, it is still possible to believe that this island nation will find a way forward, that it will gain from its experiences so that, in time, it will be genuinely associated with both the wisdom and the wealth traditionally associated with King Solomon.

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Appendix A: Report on preliminary field research trip to Solomon Islands

15th October – 5th December 2002

1.0   Introduction

In the social sciences, a field research component is very often included in postgraduate research. However, the practicalities and unexpected in relation to the actual field research itself, especially for a novice researcher, are often not anticipated, prior to departure. This is perhaps due to the variability, either in the particular discipline concerned, or the location and duration of the field research, and maybe depending also on the methodologies employed. The following is a brief outline of my preliminary field research trip to Solomon Islands in October-December 2002 as part of my doctoral studies.

2.0   Purpose of the Trip

The preliminary field trip to Solomon Islands was undertaken with the approval of my Chief Supervisor, Dr Eci Nabalarua, also Chairperson of the Department of Development Studies, School of Mäori & Pacific Development, at the University of Waikato The initial idea was for me to spend six months in Solomon Islands collecting relevant empirical data. Financial considerations, however, rendered that untenable and so my Chief Supervisor and I decided that I would make two separate field trips, each lasting two months. The first trip, 15th November–5th December 2002, was intended as a preliminary trip only, the primary purpose of that trip being to establish contacts and networks in Honiara (and collect whatever data was possible in the time available). The plan was that I would conduct interviews in both Honiara and Ulawa during my second trip to Solomon Islands.

3.0   Duration: 15ᵗʰ October – 5ᵗʰ December 2002

- Thursday 15ᵗʰ October - departed Auckland Airport at 7.10am via Brisbane for Solomon Islands arriving in Honiara at 3.30pm (local time) the same day. That night was spent in discussion with Meffrey Awao of the Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development till 3.30am about various development issues and concepts of development in Solomon Islands but especially in Ulawa Island.

- Thursday17th October - worked on correspondence to various Solomon Islands Government (SIG) Ministries and Departments, including a formal application for research permit.

- Sunday 20ᵗʰ October (at night) - had another discussion with Meffrey Awao till 2.00am. From these discussions emerged the concept of `Backward Approach'[70] to development. It was a concept Meffrey Awao came up with and one that I noted as it sounded interesting. I thought it was an idea which could be further developed in the future.

- Monday 21ˢᵗ October - did some internet correspondence with New Zealand, including receiving an email indicating that my application for research funds from NZAID had been approved. It was late for me to access the funds because I was already in the field. The funds were later accessed in the form of reimbursement.

- Tuesday 22ⁿᵈ October - had to hand-deliver my official correspondences to various SIG Ministries and Departments. This was because the General Post Office was no longer handling any government mail because of

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[70] The concept or idea, `backward approach to development', is not discussed in the thesis.

overdue payments. Telephones in most Government offices were out of order due also to unpaid bills owing to Solomon Telekom.

- Thursday 14th October - brainstorming exercise to conceptualise and contextually locate `Backward Approach' to development in Solomon Islands and Ulawa.

- Friday 25th October - visited the Honiara Public and University of the South Pacific (USP) Centre libraries.

- Saturday 26th October - another brainstorming exercise to conceptualise `Backward Approach' as an alternative development model for Solomon Islands.

- Tuesday 29th October - went to the USP Centre library.

- Wednesday 30th October - photocopied Research Information and Consent forms for distribution. Also went to Public Service Commission (PSC) Office.

- Thursday 31st October – I worked from home.

- Friday 1st November – I went to the Public Service Commission (PSC) Office. At 10.00am met with Emily Teaitala (Manager, Human resources, Public Service Commission). In the afternoon, I met with Ishmael Avui (Under-Secretary, Public Service Commission).

- Tuesday 5th November - made computer entry updates on my Diary and Field notes.

- Wednesday 6th November - At 11.00am, I went to the Rural Development Division (RDD) of the Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development. Met with Allan Agasi (Chief Rural Development Officer) who was also Acting-Director in the absence of Joe Rausi (Director) who

was on leave. At 2.10pm I went to the Prime Minister's Office and met Tione Bugotu (Deputy-Secretary to Cabinet).

- Thursday 7th November - went to the Honiara Public Library.

- Friday 8th November (9-10am) - did an interview with Honourable Nathaniel Waena, Minister, Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation & Peace.

- Monday 11th November - made computer entry updates on Diary and Field notes. Also started transcribing interview with Honourable Waena.

- Wednesday 13th November – At 10.30am I went to the Rural Development Division (RDD), Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development. Obtained permission from the Officer-in-Charge (O-in-C), Meffrey Awao to use their library resources. Went to the Ministry of Education in the afternoon but was unable to meet anyone there..

- Thursday 14th November - read Solomon Islands *Human Development Report.*[71]

- Monday 18th November – At 9.30am I went again to Rural Development Division (RDD), Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development. Met the Director, Joe Rausi, who had returned from leave but only briefly. At 11.00am I went again to the Ministry of Education and met with Donald Malasa (Under-Secretary).

- Tuesday 19th November - made computer entry update on my Diary notes.

- Thursday 21st November - went to Ministry of Education and at 2.30pm had a chance meeting with John Moffat Fugui, who currently works in the

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[71] I did not refer directly to the Solomon Islands *Human Development Report* in the thesis.

PM's Office. I arranged to have a meeting with him the following day. At 10.00pm made computer entry updates on Diary and Field notes.

- Friday 22nd November – At 1.10pm I went to the National Parliament to deliver correspondences requesting for a possible interview with the Speaker of Parliament, Sir Peter Kenilorea. At 3.50pm I met with John Moffat Fugui, a political adviser to the government, at the Cabinet Room in the Prime Minister's Office. On my way to the Prime Minister's Office, for my meeting with John M. Fugui, I passed through the Public Service Commission (PSC) Office and met in passing Toswell Kaua (Secretary to Cabinet).

- Monday 25th November – From 2.00 – 4.00pm I was at the Public library.

- Wednesday 27th November – At 9.00am I went to the Rural Development Division (RDD), Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development to use their library resources. At 10.00am I went to the National Parliament to deliver a written questionnaire which I had prepared especially for the Speaker of Parliament, at his request, as he was unavailable to meet for a formal interview. At 11.30am I met with Joe Rausi (Director, Rural Development Division, Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural Development). At 3.15pm met with Fr George Takeli (an Anglican priest from Su'uholo village, Ulawa Island). He had also come over from New Zealand and was also doing his field work to completing a Masters in Theology at the St John's Theological College in Auckland.

- Thursday 28th November – At 9.00am I went to the Rural Development Division (RDD), Ministry of Provincial Government & Rural

Development to complete my readings and notes from their library resources.

- Sunday 1st December - made computer entry updates for Diary and Field notes.

- Monday 2nd–Wednesday 4th December – was in Tulagi. Went across by boat from Honiara. Went to visit my elder brother (Henry Judah Awao Poenjili) and his family. This was not only an opportunity to visit them but also discuss Henry Awao's views on development in Ulawa and, indeed, the Solomon Islands more generally. We had some interesting discussions some of which were related to his former role as base manager in Tulagi for the local tuna fishing company, National Fisheries Development (NFD) Ltd. He resigned from the company when NFD relocated to Noro in the western Solomons in 2001.

- Thursday 5th December - return from Tulagi to Honiara by out-board-motor. 2.00am return flight to NZ (via Brisbane) arriving at Auckland Airport Friday 6th December at 10.50am.

4.0   Field encounters

My arrival in the country to do research was noted as being unexpected by the Public Service Commission (PSC). One of the reasons for this was that, because of the current circumstances in Solomon Islands, my supervisor and I had agreed that it was best for me to notify the relevant authorities and apply for a research permit after (rather than before) I arrived in the country, something that was in no way either illegal or, under normal circumstances, particularly unusual. Even so, many of those I knew in the Public Service were surprised at my arrival because

they thought I was still residing in Fiji and were unaware, particularly as I was not a scholarship-holder, that I was conducting research from a New Zealand base.

To do research in Solomon Islands, researchers must first seek approval from the PSC. Once approval is granted by the PSC, the Ministry of Education will then issue a research permit upon receipt of the fee or payment for the permit. Solomon Islands nationals are usually exempt from paying for the research permit. Most, if not all, Solomon Islanders currently studying overseas, especially at postgraduate level, are on government scholarships. So when I applied for my research permit, someone I knew well in the Ministry of Education suggested that I pay for the permit. In fact, the Head of Department[2] in another Government Ministry (whom I thought I also knew well) told me I would have to pay for any office space and other facilities in his Department that I wished to use for my research. It was a sobering experience. Later, the person concerned advised me that he had not been serious.

Secondly, the aftermath of the ethnic conflict rendered the public service virtually dysfunctional. Most government offices were either empty or left unattended and unswept. Civil servants just weren't going to work at all because of salary arrears. As indicated earlier, the Public Service Postal Mail system and telephone lines were said to be inoperative because of huge outstanding bills owing to both the Postal Services and Telekom. Whenever I wanted to make contact with anyone in a government office, I had to walk there in the hope that someone would be there to receive me. My limited finances did not allow me to get to the Ministry of Planning & Development located in another part of Honiara. Nor did I receive any

response from them regarding my official correspondence in spite of the fact that I had been given the all clear to go ahead with my research from PSC.

Thirdly, I know many of those in management positions either because we had been educated together or because they were good friends. Despite this, the overwhelming sense I felt amongst most of whom I encountered was an unwillingness to fully assist and cooperate in my research. In numerous instances verbal assurances were given, and in some cases Participant Consent Forms signed, but often the individuals concerned clearly had no real intention of becoming involved in the research. In hindsight, I was forewarned of such a possible reception by a fellow *wantok* who had already completed his doctoral studies also at the University of Waikato in 2002. But the actual experience itself in the field left me dumbfounded. I was deeply disillusioned given that the formal permission I received from the PSC (delayed though its arrival was) stated quite clearly that what I was doing – i.e., my doctoral studies and research topic – was extremely important for the country. Disappointing, to be sure, was an understatement. In fact, I began to believe what I had been told by a friend: foreigners or `strangers' were more than welcome to do research in Solomon Islands itself, especially those involved in higher degree study. This lack of genuine enthusiasm and cooperation by those whom I thought I knew was much more than simply disappointing, especially as I had tried very hard to abide by the rules and regulations surrounding ethical research expected of me by Waikato University.

Finally, my return home after a very long absence raised expectations among family and friends that I could not fulfil in that I was a full-time student on a student loan, obliged to pay my own airfares and to attempt to meet research requirements. My personal experience in Honiara suggests that the rigorous conventions of academic planning and practice do not always sit well with the social realities of one's own locality, especially for a novice researcher and naïve Solomon Islander with academic aspirations.

5.0   Lessons learnt

So what lessons were learnt from the trip? There were many but I wish to dwell on only two.

Firstly, for a novice researcher, there has to be a greater awareness and appreciation of the `realities' out there in the field or research location. My personal experiences notwithstanding, there are instances when one has to improvise in the `field' in terms of maximising the opportunities available – both time and resources - to gather the empirical data one needs.

Secondly, in the context of Solomon Islands, the dynamics of doing postgraduate research as a local in one's own country are different from those of a foreigner/stranger coming to conduct research locally. I can still recall an anthropologist, his wife and child who had come to live on my home Island back in the 1970s. They were readily accepted into the community and supported throughout the time of their research. In fact, each family member was each given a local name. My experience was very different. However, in that it had much in

common with the experiences of two other Solomon Islands researchers of whom I am aware, it seems that it is not unusual. This is something that requires further investigation. The challenge for me is to accept that the unpleasant experience I had in Honiara is part of the social and political reality of Solomon Islands life. It is something that researchers must come to terms with.

6.0   Conclusion

From a personal point of view, the trip has been a major disappointment. In retrospect, however, it revealed an important dimension of the socio-political realities of life in the Solomons, a dimension that not only affects research possibilities, but also itself invites research.