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ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN FIJI:
A SOCIO-POLITICAL EXPLORATION OF GLOBAL, REGIONAL
AND STATE DYNAMICS

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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Jf Turnbull, 8 November 2001

Jane Turnbull

ABSTRACT

The techniques of environmental impact assessment, environmental planning and protected areas are manifestations of the cultural modernisation of western society with its growth of rationality, bureaucratisation and the centrality accorded to science. Environmental impact assessment and planning techniques are also part of a growing international perspective on environmentalism that is moving towards common environmental standards and policies. The concept of formally protected areas is being subsumed into this globalist perspective, part of a scientifically-based discourse that argues loss of biodiversity is a global issue requiring a global solution.

Global environmentalism accounts for the way the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) promotes these modern environmental management techniques to relatively undeveloped Pacific island countries. It also accounts for the way that SPREP's discourse normalises the involvement of outsiders in Pacific island environmental management. But neither global environmentalism nor cultural modernisation account for the limited way that the state in Fiji, one the most developed Pacific island countries, has practised these techniques. Neither does the search for sustainable development, topical amongst the development assistance agencies funding environmental projects in the South Pacific. The Fijian state does not actively control adverse environmental effects from economic growth.

Economic and class division amongst indigenous Fijians has shaped the state's environmental management. Fiji has a hierarchical, hereditary chiefly system promoted as the basis of collective identity and culture, and a wise, unifying and stabilising influence. The systems of land tenure and rent distribution for native land leases adopted by the colonial administration have made many chiefs wealthy, and many have participated in commerce. Many have also held political power. These chiefly élite have a vested interest in both economic development and the political, land tenure and rent distribution systems. They have been able to use these systems to manipulate public opinion within their own institutions and land-owning constituencies. The state has applied environmental management in ways that meet the basic expectations of a modern state, while at the same time ensuring its efforts do not threaten its power base among the indigenous Fijians by bringing the communal ideal into conflict with the discourse of economic development.

Control over the resources of others in the name of planetary health, of preventing environmental degradation, is never too far from the surface of many western proposals for global environmental management.

David Harvey
The nature of environment; the dialectics of social and environmental change, in R. Miliband and L. Panitch (eds) *Real problems, false solutions*, London: Merlin Press, p. 25

The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice.

Mark Twain (1835-1910)
Following the Equator

PREFACE

In starting this thesis, I wanted to know whether regional and international agencies are institutionalising modern environmental management practices in the South Pacific to impose their environmental philosophy on the small, less developed states. As the research progressed, over the course of a year living in Suva (Fiji), it redirected my curiosity towards understanding why the Fijian state has little apparent interest in dealing with environmental degradation. In the end, I needed to address both questions in order to understand the global, regional and state dynamics shaping environmental management in Fiji.

There are many agencies involved in, and the influences upon, environmental management in the South Pacific. Although there are trends and common themes, it has been difficult to condense information about what is happening at international, regional, national and local levels. I have included sufficient information to allow those who might disagree with my conclusions, or who might wish to explore them further, to do so without having to repeat the time consuming searches for environmental management initiatives. For these two reasons, this document is longer than might be expected for a Masters thesis.

I thank all those in Fiji and at the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme secretariat in Apia who took the time to talk to me and to freely share information and views on environmental management. With such willing contributors, it was a pleasure to research this thesis. Thanks also to those in Fiji who let me use their collections of reports and libraries – the University of the South Pacific, the land use planning section of the Native Lands Trust Board, the National Trust of Fiji, the Department of Environment, Dick Watling (Environmental Consultants), and Robin Yarrow. I trust you all find something of use in my endeavours. I also thank my supervisor Donovan Storey for reading drafts and suggesting which areas I should explore further.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDAB	Australian International Development Assistance Bureau
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
CISEIN	Consortium for International Earth Science Information Network
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for New Era
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DP	development plan
EIA	environmental impact assessment
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FFA	Forum Fisheries Agency
FJD	Fiji dollar
GCSDSIDS	Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States
GEF	Global Environment Facility
Ha	hectare
ICAD	integrated conservation and development
INSTRAW	United Nations Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
LANL	Los Alamos National Laboratories
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Fiji)
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
NEMS	National Environmental Management Strategies
NLTB	Native Lands Trust Board (Fiji)
NZODA	New Zealand Official Development Assistance Bureau
PICAPP	Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme
PIDP	Pacific Islands Development Program
PWD	Public Works Department (Fiji)
RETA	Regional Environment Technical Assistance
SIDS	small island developing states
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SPACHEE	South Pacific Action Committee for Human Ecology and the Environment
SPBCP	South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme
SPC	South Pacific Commission
SPEC	South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation
SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SPTO	South Pacific Tourism Organisation
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	United States
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature
YMCA	Young Mens' Christian Association