

My Gun, My Brother: The World of the Papua New Guinea Colonial Police, 1920-1960, by August Ibrum K Kituai. Pacific Islands Monograph Series 15. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. ISBN 0-8248-1747-8, xx + 414 pages, tables, figures, maps, photographs, appendixes, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. US\$48.

This is a big, dense book, one of the most impressive pieces of historical scholarship to come out of Papua New Guinea. Its author, August Kituai, who has an Australian PhD, is an academic historian at the University of Papua New Guinea. The book deals with the nature of the Papua New Guinean police force recruited by the Australian colonial regimes in Papua and New Guinea from 1920 to the 1960s. If that sounds a rather wooden topic, a dry administrative history, don't be fooled. This is a book full of rich stories, synthetic histories of colonial rule, photographs of the men Kituai has been able to interview, tables, maps, a set of extensive appendixes, a glossary, list of references, and an index.

On the outside its structure looks simple: nine chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. Chapter 1 deals with the role of the Australian district officers, the *kiaps*, and discusses their background and the nature of their work and assesses their efficiency. Chapters 2 and 3 cover recruiting and training of the police force. These are based on interviews with twenty-eight former policemen who, in chapters 4 and 5, talk about their roles in exploration and pacification. Chapter 5 deals with the

police force during World War II, chapters 7, 8, and 9 with perceptions of the police held by a series of groups and individuals (Goilala and Gende villagers; Australian officers) who came up hard against them over the longer period.

On the inside, things are a little more complicated. In the introduction Kituai discusses the numbers of men involved (1,200 in Papua by 1960; 1,800 in New Guinea, with just over 100 officers from Australia), and draws a brief summary of colonial rule. He describes an intrusive system, based on direct, not indirect rule, that used force at points that the colonial rulers could control. Sir William MacGregor introduced village constables to Papua in 1892, the Germans following within a few years with their system of *luluais* and *tultuls* throughout the New Guinea mainland and the island sphere. These men, the new authority figures of brash young colonial powers, created the frontiers through policing patrols and punitive expeditions. There were lots of little colonial wars in Melanesia. Make no mistake, argues Kituai, major force was used and should not be underestimated by historians. A culture of violence was at the heart of colonial rule, and the native police were integral to it, trained as physically super-fit and superbly disciplined instruments of order and mobilization. In the first chapter Kituai deals also with the *kiaps*, the patrol officers who gave the orders. He uses patrol reports and the data from a questionnaire, reproducing the pick of these, by Rick Giddings, as an appendix. Beside the *kiaps*, behind them, shaping the patrols and the quality of contact

that the *kiaps* managed with local villagers, were the policemen.

Chapter 2 looks at their recruitment and uses individual interviews with old police about the induction procedures. The author collected oral evidence and did archival searches during fourteen months of fieldwork from 1985 to 1989. Certain districts had reputations that made their people preferred recruits. Men from the Western Division of Papua were preferred because they met the requirements laid down in six deceptively simple categories (be of superior physique and intelligence; able to converse in any one or combination of English, Tok Pisin, and Motu; etc) and because they had a reputation for taking command easily, even over their kinsmen. Central Division men, on the contrary, simply objected to the life and discipline and automatic respect for the *masta* expected of all recruits, and refused to join; they had a reputation among the colonials for "cheek." Further north, in New Guinea, Bukas had the early reputation among the Germans. Under Australian rule, recruitment covered a wider area, though coastal Bougainville was still favored, along with east New Britain and some islands. Individual district officers had their favorite recruiting grounds, such as Madang. Men joined for the adventure, or because the police offered a means under cover of payback against enemies or evening up an imbalance between coastals and highlanders. Like Melanesian plantation workers indentured to Queensland, some joined as a rite of passage to prove their bravery and their skills and bring home wealth. Individuals and

groups quickly saw that here was a main chance worth taking.

A mixture of nostalgia, sentimentality, humor, and egotism shows through the small sample of interviews Kituai works from. Men were inducted into a cult of obedience via training in drills and the works of western discipline laid down in the 1911 British infantry training manual. The Australians concentrated on producing highly competent physical specimens, with an inbuilt systemic inability or unwillingness to cultivate Papua New Guineans' intelligence for, say, detective work. Kituai describes the patterns of police activity in detail, the categories of penetration that were employed away from the stations, and the manifold uses of the patrol by both *kiaps* and the police themselves. The men were treated like an extension of the labor force but were utterly different from those who worked on the plantations, because they wielded a simple but potent instrument of power, the rifle. Rules governed the use of guns, but violence could have its way on patrol, and police were less likely to be punished for the use of force than for breaches of discipline. Kituai recounts too, with faint disgust, the expediency of the colonial legal system in tolerating, or exonerating, *kiaps* guilty of cruelty, in some cases torture.

The chapter on the Second World War is a mostly critical tale of a system of rule that abandoned its police force as the Japanese moved swiftly in. The police were disarmed, making them refugees in their own land, or they were employed to help regulate a labor system that mobilized more than fifty percent of available adult males

at the height of the war. Many police wanted to fight as soldiers, and did so, openly or surreptitiously, for one or the other side. The experience for many was bitter: their loyalty, adaptability, discipline, and intelligence in the end meant little or nothing to the Australians running the war.

Kituai does not flinch from telling tales of hypocrisy by black and white bearers of colonial peace, indeed of cases of sadism by both police and their district officers, which crushed the confidence of some communities. There were plenty of errant police who flouted or manipulated the regulations, but also an administrative system that policed ugly, inflexible regulations, overlooked men's basic needs, or robbed them of their pensions for trumped up reasons of bureaucracy. Some of his conclusions come from the work done with his informants. We get three transcripts of these interviews in appendixes, with Sasa Goreg, Petrus Tigavu, and Sir John Guise, Papua New Guinea's most eminent former policeman who became governor general of the new nation state at independence in 1975. As well, there are two records of bruising encounters with colonial officialdom and its police by Tawi of Gende, near Madang, and by Kituai's own mother.

My Gun, My Brother proceeds on various levels and uses a mixture of approaches, which does not always make for an easy sequence to follow, or guarantee the conclusions. The figures are never statistically significant. Sometimes the documentary evidence is sparse and the resulting generalizations imprecise and uncertain. The introductory summary history exploits curiously old-fashioned sources (which

may reflect how long ago the initial research for the PhD was carried out). And the interviews are highly selective and variable (understandable as the older generation of police dies). The Australian *kiaps* seem to have been no better in providing comprehensive information to Kituai: he got a poor response to his questionnaire, though the best is captured in an appendix to the book. The argument is discursive, meandering in and out of individual stories and arguments, the connections not apparent all the time.

Kituai does not adopt the current fashion for presenting the colonial system as a "project," a cultural system whose signs and symbols must be decoded and tied to the multifarious texts of its enactment. He reads it through its regulations and the stories of individuals' interventions, assuming they had a wide and deep impact, as assuredly they did in the hands of the policemen who carried the regulations into the villages. The police were the enforcers of Australian rule, but Kituai leaves open the extent to which the system was founded on this unwritten agreement: "you do the dirty work of colonialism, and we will let you take rewards in women, pigs, and a few traditional valuables." It is not therefore a cultural history approach, yet that's the paradox: for the end result is a "thickish" description of a colonial culture throughout Papua New Guinea under Australian rule, in which the singular stories of individual police who were the sharp end of that rule give weight and texture to an analysis of the system that will stand its ground for historians of colonialism. It remains only to say that the book itself will last a long

time, for it is another example of the excellent technical standards of production for which the University of Hawai'i Press has become noted.

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Another Way: The Politics of Constitutional Reform in Post-Coup Fiji, by Brij V Lal. History of Development Studies 7. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Asia Pacific Press, Asia Pacific School of Economics and Management, Australian National University, 1998. ISBN 07315-2381-4, ix + 223 pages, appendixes, glossary, map, selected contemporary biographies, selected contemporary statistics, bibliography, index. A\$29.99.

Justifiably glowing evaluations of Brij V Lal's latest book, *Another Way: The Politics of Constitutional Reform in Post-Coup Fiji*, by some leading Pacific Island scholars are to be found on its back cover. Lal, a Pacific historian at Australian National University and a member of the Constitutional Review Commission, has produced a remarkable volume combining a very well written narrative of the events, personalities, and interests that have been prominent in the review of Fiji's decreed 1990 Constitution with the author's own incisive interpretations of the unfolding drama of post-coup Fiji.

The book consists of five chapters and four appendixes. In the first four chapters, the author provides his account of the politics of the review process, the work of the Constitu-

tional Review Commission, reactions to the commission's report and recommendations, the deliberations of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee (JPSC), and the unanimous adoption of the Constitutional Amendment Bill of 1997. The fifth chapter is an ensemble of ten unrelated pieces, including an extremely readable and humorous essay by Lal entitled Submissions, which provides an account of oral presentations by individuals and groups on the 1990 Constitution. Glimpses of the relationship among the three commissioners, Sir Paul Reeves, Lal, and Tomasi Vakatora, are provided as well as how, "with time" Lal and Vakatora's natural suspicion of each other, "[was] transformed into trust and trust into friendship."

In "Beginnings," the very first section of the book, the author recollects his movements on the fateful morning of the military coup, 14 May 1987. He provides a personal account of his own initial reaction of disbelief and the responses of his family members and close friends. He recounts the widespread condemnation of the military takeover, the pro-coup celebrations by Taukeists, and the slow return to constitutionality.

The first chapter, "Sowing the Seeds," touches briefly on the various explanations of the coups and the efforts to turn the country around to some form of constitutional rule. Insights are provided into the powerful vested interests in Fiji society and the dynamics of the politics of extremism, which influenced the constitutional committee appointed in 1987 and led by Sir John Falvey, the former attorney general.