

also recognized: negative physical effects resulting from kava overuse are mentioned, although not a lot is made of the negative social effects of kava abuse, which result in a serious anti-kava stance being adopted by some women's and church groups.

However, the critical modern issue results from the evolution of kava from a recreational narcotic beverage into a commercial pharmaceutical product of incredible potential. Kava has long been a cash crop serving domestic markets, but its further development into an international commodity, which accelerated into a boom market in the late 1990s (and then crashed, perhaps temporarily, at the end of 1998), has raised important matters relating to intellectual property rights and associated questions of the export of kava plant stock and the development of kava growing outside the Pacific. While the claims of the kava-growing nations of the Pacific to some kind of proprietary ownership of kava are given expression in the video, they are drowned out by the more numerous voices of kava entrepreneurs and traders, as well as the representatives of the pharmaceutical sector, who persuade the viewer that a natural plant can never be protected as an item of intellectual property.

Having been convinced, viewers may have second thoughts. Have the idyllic scenes and mystical sounds romanticized nature's soporific, and entranced them into concurring with the Pacific region losing control over the production and marketing of this commodity? This nagging suspicion is enhanced by the realization that a somewhat psychodramatic subplot has been interspersed throughout the

video, involving footage from Germany. This hails the beneficial effects of a particular named brand of kava tablet, and highlights the groundbreaking scientific work of the particular named pharmaceutical company that has produced it, and whose experts are given the final word on numerous occasions. Has an attractive, appealing survey of the role of kava in Oceanic society been subverted into a commercial promotion for the German laboratory, its product, and its plans to develop huge kava plantings outside the Pacific? This possibility, and the fact that my own university sponsored it, is a little troubling, so I think I'll find a local kava bar and have a shell to set my mind at rest.

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Kilim Taem. 50 minutes, VHS, color, 1998. In Bislama, with English subtitles. Directors, Anthony Mullins, Randall Wood; producer, Jan Cattoni; distributor, UNICEF, Fiji. Email: UNICEF@is.com.fj

Kilim Taem (Killing time) is a documentary based on interviews with young people in Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila. It addresses the problems young ni-Vanuatu are currently facing, especially in urban areas. Fifty percent of the population of Vanuatu is under eighteen; half of them have been born since Vanuatu achieved independence in 1980. The problems young people now face did not exist even ten years ago, and, until this film was made and screened, most people in the country had not noticed the

critical, rapid changes taking place. Young people themselves noticed, of course, and in the mid-1990s coined an ironic self-description, designating themselves as “SPR,” or as the “SPR *Kampani*.” The initials stand for *spirim pablik rod* (hitting the road), the “SPR Company” is a play on the idea of a business—these are the people whose work it is to walk the roads of Port Vila.

All the people who appear in the film are under twenty-five years old, both interviewers and interviewees. They speak with remarkable openness and freedom, and a number of controversial issues are raised, notably in relation to police brutality, political instability, and crime. What is perhaps even more remarkable is the way in which people speak vulnerably about their hopes, dreams, and disappointments. One girl speaks of her dream to have a job, so much a dream that she cannot even imagine what that job would be. Young men long for the dignity of self-employment. A young woman interviewed in Port Vila prison, whose constantly twisting fingers expose her humiliation with painful clarity, explains that she stole because she was, in effect, too shy to hustle for work.

The film was made by a group of young filmmakers from Griffith University in Australia, in conjunction with and at the invitation of the Vanuatu Young People’s Project, which is based at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. It aims, through strategies such as research, video production, and advocacy, to provide a forum in which young ni-Vanuatu can speak out. Through it young people participated in all aspects of the film production, including planning, selecting, and

organizing locations and individuals to be interviewed, and shooting the footage, as well as assisting with lighting and sound. Editing was carried out at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, so that young people influenced many decisions about the way in which the film was put together. The Young People’s Project was the initiative of the anthropologist Jean Mitchell working in collaboration with the director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Ralph Regenvanu. Mitchell’s achievement in directing the research program on which the film is based is very considerable.

The central issue the film addresses is unemployment and its consequence, idleness. Young men walk the streets, watch videos, make and drink home-brewed alcohol or kava, engage in *ae-soping* (window shopping), go dancing. Young women tend to do housework in the settlements around Port Vila, and often get pregnant very young. Some interviewees talk about how poverty leads them to thefts of garden produce and household goods. The problem of education is also a focus. Many young people have received only a basic education because their parents were unable or unwilling to pay school fees. However, even secondary education does not guarantee a job, and where people do find work, it is unlikely to be concomitant with their educational level.

This is the first generation of ni-Vanuatu who do not have a strong and enduring link to land in the islands. Affiliation to a place (captured in the Bislama expression *man ples*) is basic to ni-Vanuatu identity. Here, for the first time, are people who may never have been to their home island and who, even while they

will identify themselves as belonging to it, have no sense of real connection to it. The commonplace public rhetoric that the unemployed should go back to their islands has a hollow ring for this generation, as it does for those whose island is already too small for its population. Despite this, *kastom*, island-based knowledge and practice, is the central positive concept in this film. Young people speak about *kastom* as providing them with a sense of identity, as linking them to land they may own in the islands, and as offering, in chiefs, a form of community leadership far more acceptable to them than the police. The film cuts back and forth between the settlements of Port Vila, and footage of *kastom* ceremonies in the islands. There is a strong positive assessment of *kastom* as giving meaning and purpose to life. A number of groups in the settlements practice *kastom* dances and ceremonies, both for themselves, and also for tourists, and interviewees talk about the value such *kastom* groups have for them.

For all the strength and merit of the content of *Kilim Taem*, it does have some problems. One of them is that it opposes young people not to other ni-Vanuatu (the employed elite in town, or those secure in the islands) but to tourists and to a tourist view of Port Vila. This opposition is unexamined, and is itself somewhat ambivalent. There are long beautiful shots of Port Vila harbor taken from a tourist resort, but there is a lot of visually constructed criticism of tourists, for example as they watch *kastom* shows. An elderly female tourist bopping to the music of a street singer has drawn an affectionate laugh from every ni-

Vanuatu audience with whom I have watched this film, but the intent of the filmmakers seems more mocking. The focus on tourists seems somewhat strange. It does, however, provide a lighter note in contrast to the much more serious material such as the role of the police. There is also a problem with the way footage of *kastom* ceremonies is introduced; differences between islands and ceremonies are not always clearly marked, and the overall effect can be confusing. There are also rather too many emotive shots of small children crowding the camera in the narrow alleys of the settlements. More significantly, the sound mix appears at times to have been made with subtitles in mind. It is often difficult to hear a Bislama speaker over the top of music or other background sound.

Such criticisms pale before the achievement of this film—the giving of a voice to the young people of Port Vila. It was shown on television in Vanuatu (in the Cultural Centre program slot), and followed by a televised panel discussion featuring a number of national leaders, such as the commissioner of police. It was also discussed on the front page of the government newspaper. A number of government and church initiatives have taken place in response to it, the effectiveness of which has yet to be assessed. The seriousness of this response reflects the importance of this film. It is one that anyone interested in the contemporary Pacific will find painfully illuminating.

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