

ments made by the author during his sojourn at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (in Denmark) in the year 2000. But while it is true that the book still has the hallmarks of a dissertation, I must also say that the text is beautifully written, with many delightful turns of phrase (and the maps and figures are also a pleasure to contemplate). The theoretical wrapping may be just as essential for the global market in intellectual capital as it is for the examiners of doctoral dissertations, but the real value of this work lies in the excellence of its ethnographic exploration of linkages between national and local institutions in Papua New Guinea.

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In-House in Papua New Guinea with Anthony Siaguru, by Anthony Siaguru. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2001. ISBN 0-7315-3680-0, xvi + 359 pages, acronyms, glossary, notes, AU\$36.00, US\$32.00.

This volume is a collection of Sir Anthony Siaguru's newspaper columns, "In House," in the *Post Courier*, the leading English-language daily in Papua New Guinea. Most of the articles in this collection appeared from 1988 to 2000. The articles are organized into themes close to the author's interest, namely "The Great Game" or contemporary politics; "Transparency" (the author is one of the founders of Transparency PNG); "Changing Society"; "Bougainville"; "Celebratory"; "Economic Matters";

"The Other Estate" (dealing with the press, women, and the Church); and "Friends and Neighbours." For those unfamiliar with Papua New Guinea, Anthony Siaguru is one of the "Gang of Four" who ran the PNG bureaucracy during the crucial first decade after independence. He was secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, before opting for active politics. He successfully ran for a parliamentary seat in 1982 and was appointed minister for state and public service. After serving just one term in parliament, he took up the position as deputy secretary-general of the commonwealth in London for seven years before returning to Papua New Guinea. Since then, he has emerged as a major corporate player in Papua New Guinea's small economy, holding seats on the boards of all the major PNG corporations and helping to establish the Port Moresby Stock Exchange. He is also known to be a major behind-the-scenes player in Papua New Guinea's byzantine world of politics.

The bulk (and the most interesting and valuable part) of the book can be found in the first section, "The Great Game." Here Siaguru expresses his thoughts on the biggest problem facing Papua New Guinea since independence: political instability can be summarized in one phrase: vote of no confidence. Since independence in 1975, more governments have fallen due to a vote of no confidence than by losing a general election. Unlike votes of no confidence, the timing of PNG general elections runs like clockwork—every five years or at the end of a full term of parliament. Parliament has never agreed to earlier dis-

solution because less than 30 percent of members get reelected. Siaguru suggests the following constitutional reforms to solve the instability. First, give the prime minister the power to dissolve parliament at any time and call a general election. Second, change from a first-past-the-post (FPTP) to a preferential-voting (PR) system. Third, require ministers of parliament to seek reelection if they leave the political party in which they were elected. Fourth, strengthen the political party system by officially registering all political parties and have their party constitutions and procedures formally drawn up for public inspection. Fifth, set the maximum number of ministries at no more than fourteen. At present, the constitution allows the creation of ministries up to one quarter of the total number of ministers of parliament. Thus, ministries are created to reward political allies or to cement political alliances.

It is interesting to note that these five key suggestions were first made in 1985 and that three out of five were only adopted in 2001. An Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates bill and a Preferential Voting bill were both promulgated after a successful campaign spearheaded by the Electoral Reform Project, a subprogram of Transparency PNG, of which Siaguru is both chairman and cofounder. Yet from all accounts, the laws meant to strengthen political parties have largely been failures and a new law is currently being drawn up to address the same issues. The next general election, due in 2007, will be held under the PR system. Yet trials have shown that the results of the PR system will not be different from those under the

FPTP system; candidates who win under the present system are also likely to be the victors under the PR system. What will change significantly is the complexity of the counting procedures. Even the present FPTP system, which is extremely simple to count, has been inundated with counting problems caused largely by the incompetence of the PNG Electoral Commission and the tendency of candidates to cheat. I'm afraid that chaos will reign in 2007 (and many lives will be lost) when the PR system is used for the first time. (Strictly speaking, PNG used a PR system in the colonial era, but it was a different PR system.)

The major weakness in the present volume is that those unfamiliar with PNG politics will find it almost impossible to follow the plot and the myriad of personalities covered in the book. The audience would be much better served had the publishers included a general chapter giving a brief political history of Papua New Guinea and a timeline marking the major political events after independence. This would have allowed readers to more fully appreciate what the author is writing about. As it stands only those intimately acquainted with PNG politics (especially during the period 1988–2000) will be able to fully appreciate Siaguru's writing. The other problem with the book is the author's inconsistency. On the one hand, it is clear he is immensely proud of the young PNG democracy and the great diversity; on the other, he continually attacks it, calling it "rotten" and "abnormal," among other things. Politicians are another prime target; readers are left with the clear impression that politi-

cians are mostly corrupt, self-serving, and on constant offer to the highest bidder. Yet Siaguru offers no real solutions to the present Westminster system, which he obviously believes has failed the nation. He is not alone. Countless other prominent Papua New Guineans believe the entire political system is working only for a very small elite, while the whole nation is deteriorating quickly. Every major reform undertaken since independence has been unsuccessful.

Papua New Guinea has now joined the select ranks of nation-states commonly referred to as “failed states.” Siaguru’s weekly ruminations give us a unique window into workings of a failed state. He ultimately reminds us that failed states can continue to move along, deteriorating little by little, without actually falling over the cliff.

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The West New Guinea Debacle: Dutch Colonisation and Indonesia 1945–1962, by C L M Penders. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press; Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0-8248-2470-9; viii + 490 pages, tables, map, glossary, abbreviations, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$39.00.

Following the fall of President Suharto in 1998, there was a burgeoning of separatist sentiments in the outer islands of Indonesia. In East Timor this culminated in a vote for independence. In Irian Jaya/West Papua, too, where the Organisasi Papua Merdeka had maintained a low level of insur-

gency for almost thirty years, there was an upsurge of nationalist feeling and new demands for independence, or at least autonomy. After some loosening of Jakarta’s grip over the province—with the Indonesian government eventually accepting its renaming as Papua—central authority has been reasserted and a policy of repression has been resumed.

Amid the briefly revived international interest in West Papuan claims to a separate state, there was some looking back to the messy history of the Netherlands’ reluctant decolonization, and the circumstances that resulted in the so-called Act of Free Choice (popularly known as the Act Free of Choice) by which West Papua was formally incorporated into the Indonesian Republic in 1969.

The West New Guinea Debacle, by Dutch-born Australian scholar Chris Penders, is thus timely. It surveys the genesis of the West New Guinea/West Papua question in the period before and immediately after the Second World War, details the processes of decolonization and nationalization across Indonesia between 1950 and 1958, provides a detailed account of the international dispute over West Papua from 1949 to 1962, and concludes with a chapter appropriately entitled “The Papuans Betrayed.”

The West Papua story is a sad tale of initial colonial neglect followed by the nurturing of unrealistic expectations of sovereignty on the part of the Dutch colonial government; of bloody-mindedness on the part of Indonesia’s post-independence leaders, who made it clear that they would not allow the mandated vote on the future status of West Papua to yield anything