

# Pacific Geographies

Research | Notes | Current Issues from the Asia-Pacific Region

## The Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Genesis, current situation and geopolitical aspects





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## EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

Pacific Geographies celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> issue and we are very happy to present to you recollections from former managing editors who share insight about their initial intention for the journal and thoughts on its current development. We particularly appreciate that Günter Eisebith, the founding editor, tells us more about his motivation for setting up the Pacific News, and also kindly thank Paul Blazek and Julia Albrecht for their contributions and their warm words about our journal.

Along with these tributes, we are convinced that we have been able to gather once again an interesting kaleidoscope of articles. The first paper examines the refugee crisis of the Rohingya who are often described as the most persecuted minority in the world. Geographer Stefan Bepler works for a NGO trying to alleviate the devastating situation at the refugee camps in Bangladesh and has been there himself in early 2018.

Raphael Rosner reports on New Caledonia, heavily dependent on nickel mining and torn between loyalists and pro-independent Kanak people. Raphael describes the situation of subcontracting in the case of the Koniambo project, located at the Northern Province, and thereby focuses on questions of indigenous entrepreneurship and social embeddedness.

Mats Garbe and Marion Struck-Garbe analyse the tragic situation of women in Papua New Guinea who are frequently exposed to sexual assault, rape and domestic violence in both urban and rural areas.

Two book reviews complete the present issue of Pacific Geographies. Hermann Mückler looks at an in-depth analysis of the ecumenical movement in the Pacific and our regular reviewer Britta Schmitz discusses the extensive volume "Souls of China" exploring the various religious movements of this still communist party led country.

We sincerely hope you enjoy your readings of our jubilee issue.

The managing editors, Michael Waibel & Matthias Kowasch

# Pacific Geographies

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The PG provides an interdisciplinary academic platform to discuss social, cultural, environmental and economic issues and developments in the Asia-Pacific region.

In order to uphold scientific standards, the PG is implementing a peer-review process. Articles marked as „scientific papers“ have been peer-reviewed by two external reviewers. Articles marked as „research notes“ have been peer-reviewed by one external reviewer and a member of the editorial board. All other articles have been reviewed by the editorial board. Scientific papers and research notes receive a Digital Object Identifier (DOI).

The Association for Pacific Studies (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Pazifische Studien e.V., APSA) was founded in 1987 at the Department of Geography of the University of Technology in Aachen. Activities include workshops, conferences, public lectures and poster exhibitions. The book series PAZIFIK FORUM was initiated in 1990. In 1992, it was complemented by the journal PACIFIC NEWS. APSA-Members receive the PACIFIC GEOGRAPHIES at no cost as a membership benefit.

The APSA sees itself as one of the largest scientific networks in Germany for academics and practitioners with an interest in the Asia-Pacific region as well as academic exchange.

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### COVER PICTURE

Water Station at Leda Rohingya  
Refugee Camp, Bangladesh

© Stefan Bepler 2018



# The Rohingya conflict: Genesis, current situation and geopolitical aspects

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**Abstract:** The Rohingya in Myanmar are often described as the most persecuted minority in the world. In the former Burma, the Rohingya are considered illegal immigrants and have been denied citizenship for decades. Since the end of August 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya from Rakhine State have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh. After explaining the historical background, this paper aims to investigate the reasons behind the most recent violence and subsequent mass flights of Rohingya. The research is based on extensive literature and media analysis, interviews and discussions with researchers, academics in Dhaka and NGO representatives in Cox's Bazar as well as a visit to a refugee camp in LEDA/Cox's Bazar in February 2018. The public usually discusses mainly the ethnic-religious and humanitarian causes and effects of conflict. However, this paper shows that there are massive political, economic and geopolitical interests of directly and indirectly involved actors behind the conflict. As of today, no solution of the crisis is in sight. Therefore, further analysis is needed to find practical approaches for either repatriation or finding new living spaces for the Rohingya.

**Keywords:** Myanmar, Rohingya, refugees, Rohingya conflict, displacement, geopolitical background, Bangladesh

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Since the mass exodus in August 2017 the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar is getting attention in the international public media. The ethnic-religious causes and humanitarian aspect of the refugee situation are put in the foreground. This article reviews first the historical background of the Rohingya as an ethnic group and their discrimination in the recent past, followed by a description of the escalation of the violent persecution, the subsequent mass flight as well as the international reactions and relief actions. Next the economic and geopolitical interests of different international players are pointed out. Finally the most recent problems and concerns in the refugee camp areas are exposed.

Source of all photos: Stefan Bepler, February 2018.

Figure 1: Water is allocated twice per day, Leda camp, Bangladesh.



## Etymology and today's spread

The word "Rohingya" was used for the first time as "Rooinga" (= inhabitant of Arakan, today's province Rakhine) in 1799 in the "Journal Asiatic Researches" for a long-established population in Rakhine (Ibrahim 2016, Gill 2015). Later they were called "Muslim Arakanese".

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diversified societies of the world. 135 "ethnic nationalities" with numerous subgroups are officially recognized in the Burma Citizenship Law from 1982, but the ethnic Rohingya were not included (Farzana 2017, 2018). In the first constitution of Myanmar in 1947, all people living at that time in "Frontier Areas" and who intended to stay permanently were considered citizens and accepted as "The People of Burma" (Farzana 2018). However, when General Ne Win came to power in 1962, the Rohingya were deemed as not compatible with other ethnic groups in Burma. Other Muslims, who do not belong to the Rohingya, have Myanmar nationality (Ibrahim 2016).

The Muslims in Rakhine have not always identified themselves as an independent group. But a uniform concept with an identifying name had political advantages, since recognition as an ethnic group would increase the chances to gain the right to citizenship. The common experience generated by decades of discrimination contributed further to the identity formation of the Rohingya. The term "Rohingya" as an ethnic group spread only after the major refugee movements with the human rights debate through international organizations (Farzana 2017; Bochmann 2017).

In early 2017, around one million Rohingya lived in Rakhine (see Fig. 2). At that time about another million Rohingya lived already as refugees in neighbouring countries and in the Middle East. The government of Myanmar avoids the term Rohingya and speaks instead of "Bengalis" that immigrated illegally from the neighbouring Bangladesh. The home state of the Rohingya, Rakhine, remains one of the poorest provinces of Myanmar despite its rich natural resources such as oil, gas and uranium (Zoglul 2017).



Figure 2: Map of Rakhine state in Myanmar / the refugees camps are in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

## Historical Background: From the Kingdom of Arakan to the colonial era

Since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Arab and Persian merchants settled in Southern Burma and the then independent Buddhist Kingdom of Arakan. This region was geographically isolated from the neighbours by the Yoma-Mountain Range and the Naaf River. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Arakan Muslim population had close relationships to the Bengal king. Increasing Islamization occurred until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but a tolerant attitude between the religions prevailed. In 1784, the Burmese king conquered Arakan. After massacres and the introduction of forced labour, the first major exodus followed to the English colony of Bengal (today divided into India and Bangladesh).

From 1824 to 1886 England colonized Burma. Through Arakan they invaded the lowlands and were supported by the local population. Afterwards, artificially defined ethnic and territorial administrative units

separated the ethnic minorities and thus created the political and social conditions for local liberation movements.

This common British policy of "divide and rule" (divide et impera) was a key cause of ethnic tensions. Minorities were "positively discriminated". Ethnic and religious groups that collaborated with the British were preferably recruited into the army and appointed to senior government positions. Until 1937, Burma remained a province of colonial India, after which it became an independent colony. For labour in plantations and ports, the British organized enormous intraregional labour migration movements from India to Arakan (Zöllner 2008; Farzana 2017).

During the Second World War, a national liberation movement under Aung San collaborated with the Japanese at their "Anti-imperialist invasion" of Burma. Most minorities remained loyal to the British Empire. After their victory, the Japanese placed



Figure 3: Waste disposal is a problem, Leda Camp

ethnic Burmese in administration positions and abolished protection measures for the minorities. This led to bloody attacks of the Burmese independence army of Aung San and others. After the end of World War II, Burma was again integrated into the British colonial empire.

### Independence and further development

Burma gained independence in 1948. Aung San succeeded first in getting the support of the ethnic groups for a federally organized state. However, after his early death, a change of policy towards Burmese dominance and national unity took place. The minorities perceived a breach of Aung San's promises and a threat to their identities. Conflicting legislation led to unequal treatment of ethnic groups and erupted in violent conflicts in the border regions. In the late 1950s almost all ethnic groups took up arms against the regime (Bochmann 2017). The military leadership finally took advantage of the situation and staged a coup on March 2, 1962. In some cases, General Ne Win revoked civil rights of opponents against the military government (Bochmann 2017; Farzana 2017). Because of their collaboration with the British, the Rohingya were seen as enemies and not considered as Burmese nationals.

After an administrative reform in 1964 a centralist state was

established. The 1974 constitution divided the country in Burmese-dominated divisions and minority-dominated states, the latter without true autonomy. Social and political organizations of the Rohingya were successively dissolved (Ibrahim 2016). In late 1977 military actions against "illegal immigrants" caused massive exodus and over 200,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. With the "Burma Citizenship Law" (1982), the Rohingya finally became stateless. They were not recognized as one of the national ethnic groups and were denied citizenship as well. Subsequently they were largely defenceless in the arbitrariness of the violent treatment of police, military and authorities.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya left their home since the independence of Myanmar in 1948. In 1978 around 220,000 left, and in 1991/92 another 250,000 fled to neighbouring Bangladesh because of the violence of Tatmadaw, the army of Myanmar. This led to the conclusion that the Rohingya are the most persecuted minority of the world (GfbV 2014 and others).

The daughter of Aung San, Aung San Suu Kyi resisted the military regime and was forced to live for 15 years under house arrest. In 1991 she received the Nobel Peace Prize. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), finally won the election in 2015. Her political

power, however, is fragile. Through a constitutional clause, the presidency is denied to her. Military generals still occupy a quarter of all seats in parliament, and three ministries and the army is not subject to any civilian control. This was one of the reasons why she never really addressed the Rohingya issues when they became critical.

Since the beginning of political reforms in Myanmar in 2011 the situation of the Rohingya has worsened again. Influential and radical Buddhist Monks pressured the government to issue laws to "protect race and religion". In 2012, the militant Buddhist movement Ma Ba Tha triggered a violent wave against the Rohingya (Ibrahim 2016). Their right to vote was revoked and no party - not even the NLD of Aung San Suu Kyi - nominated Muslim candidates for the parliamentary election in November 2015.

With increasing release of its power to civilian institutions, the military has deliberately constructed the image of a threat by Muslims to the Buddhist Society and thus created a new enemy. The military government thereby cleverly increased their acceptance and redirected the former rejection of the military dictatorship as a unitary- and identity-forming social integration movement against the Muslim minorities, especially the Rohingya (Wade 2017).



Figure 4: Shelters in Leda camp

### Latest violence and mass exodus in 2016/2017

Persecution, statelessness and poverty of the Rohingya made it easy for extremist groups to find followers. The ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army) was founded, in exile in Saudi Arabia, in 2016. The International Crisis Group (ICG, based in Brussels) asserts that the ARSA have contacts with Islamists, although the ARSA denies this (Zoglul 2017).

In October 2016, the ARSA attacked checkpoints and killed numerous police officers. Myanmar security forces responded with great severity. Both sides accused each other of burning villages and mass killings. The United Nations spoke of "genocide" and "crimes against humanity". On August 25, 2017, insurgents attacked again. The army violently went against Rohingya rebels. According to human rights groups, arbitrary killings, systematic rape, burning down houses and evictions occurred. What the government claimed as "cleansing actions" against terrorists, the UN Human Rights Commissioner called a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing". In the aftermath, around 702,000 Muslims fled to Bangladesh (ISCG 2018).

The government of Myanmar still sees the "Bengali Muslims" as illegal immigrants. Unlike other minorities, the Rohingya are assumed to withhold

their loyalty to Burma. A government official stated that people who are fleeing are not citizens of Myanmar (Farzana 2017). Back in 1979, Myanmar let the refugees return, but not as citizens. A Muslim State in the area of Burma was feared. After the ARSA attacks, state media and official government spokespeople have actively propagated and inflamed anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya sentiments (Amnesty International 2018).

Aung San Suu Kyi, as the de facto national leader, largely keeps out of the conflict. For the West, this looks like a betrayal of her old values, but for Aung San Suu Kyi it might be a necessary means to not weaken her already fragile position towards the military and her influence on a democratic future. Domestically, with a commitment to the unwanted, stateless minority she could lose the support of the majority of the population (among others: Ibrahim 2016).

Despite heavy flood damage and its own poverty issues, Bangladesh in 2017 has initially taken the refugees (Figures 4 and 5). The government of Bangladesh admits a cultural, linguistic and religious proximity to the Muslim Bengalis in Chittagong, but sees the escape movements primarily as an internal problem of Myanmar. The Rohingya are not considered original Bangladeshis and are not accepted

as their own ethnicity and according to official viewpoint should return to Myanmar. A recognition of the refugees would legitimize Myanmar's policies that they are originally non-Burmese and could lead to even more expulsion and escape. An acceptance could also lead to conflicts with the local population and influence elections in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh government therefore avoids responsibility by identifying the Rohingya as "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals - FDMN" and not as "Rohingya" or "refugees" (Farzana 2018).

Bangladesh and Myanmar both want to avoid more conflicts because of refugees, yet there are unresolved questions on maritime boundaries (gas and oil resources), international pressure and foreign investment and trade interests, which are more important for them. After bilateral negotiations in November 2017, the governments of both states signed a Letter of Intent on the voluntary repatriation of the Muslim minority "in safety, protection and dignity". Almost no refugees returned since these conditions are not recognizable for them.

In August 2018 a fact-finding mission was undertaken by the Human Rights Council and wrote a report based on information obtained by interviews with victims and eyewitnesses, satellite imagery,



Figure 5: Main "shopping street" in Leda camp

photographs and other documents. The report highlights serious human rights violations in Rakhine since August 2017, demands investigation and prosecution for genocide and crimes against humanity and draws up a list of alleged perpetrators (Human Rights Council 2018).

### Reactions from UN and other countries

UN organizations such as UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), WFP (World Food Program) and WHO (World Health Organization), initiated a first aid program for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh in 1978. After the mass flight in 1991/92, UNHCR tended to repatriate refugees and participated in the control of "voluntary return" of over 230,000 Rohingya between 1993 and 1997. The UNCHR was criticized because the repatriation was according to independent observers not always voluntary. UNHCR sees the conflict primarily as a humanitarian crisis; a political solution was never part of the strategy (Farzana 2017, Ibrahim 2016).

According to OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) 1,3 million people (refugees and receiving communities in Bangladesh) urgently require help. Bangladesh provided public land for camps and founded a national task force. The UN Inter

Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) comprises 45 INGOs (international NGOs) and UN organizations. Needed until spring 2018 were at least 434 million USD (ISCG 2018 (1); OCHA 2017). According to a new plan for March-December 2018, more than 950 million USD are needed for the camps and host communities (ISCG March 2018). As of May 24 2018, there are 915,000 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh; the government of Bangladesh reports 1.118.426 Rohingya refugees as of June 5 2018 (ISCG 2018 (2)). More than 620,000 are living in Kutupalong, making it currently the largest refugee camp in the world.

According to recent surveys the refugees are afraid of returning. They feel they belong to Myanmar, but they do not want to be repatriated by coercion and hope for security and equal civil rights. They are pleased about the reception in Bangladesh but demand from the government to solve security issues such as sexual violence and human trafficking, which are not included in the bilateral agreement (Amnesty International 2017; OXFAM 2017).

Since 1997, the US and the EU have imposed sanctions on Myanmar, and gradually expanded them. Trade and investments were largely banned. After political and economic reforms in Myanmar the sanctions were mostly annulled from 2012, except for

the arms trade (Gill 2015). In spite of the still on-going refugee crisis, new sanctions are not planned.

Germany contributed 60 million euros to EU humanitarian aid activities (Spiegel Online 2017). There are also some aid projects in Rakhine. Focus of the German involvement is on the prevention of a still wider spread of the humanitarian emergency. Federal Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel visited in November 2017 a refugee camp in Bangladesh and promised further emergency assistance. In the German public, the conflict is almost exclusively seen from a humanitarian point of view. Donations are collected and aid distributed from almost all major German aid organizations.

### Geopolitical and economic interests

There is more behind the conflict than just religious and ethnic tensions. Key factors for the persecution of Rohingya are political and economic interests.

The Rakhine state plays a strategically important role for Myanmar neighbours. China's cross-border economic initiative "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) aims to connect the west of China and the Bay of Bengal with pipelines and a highway (Fig. 2). Oil and gas transports from the Middle East and the oil and gas reserves in Myanmar are necessary





Figure 6: Toilets in Leda camp, provided by international aid project. The toilets are connected to a biogas plant.

for China's energy security. The OBOR project will bring substantial economical advantages, namely by bypassing the security concerns and politically fragile bottleneck in the Strait of Malacca. One pipeline begins in the Bay of Bengal in the Rakhine state. After local protests, Rohingya coastal communities were vacated in 2012 to clear ways for the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (Zoglul 2017).

India is building the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project through Rakhine state, to connect its Northeast directly with the Bay of Bengal. The harbour works in Sittwe, where the Kaladan Project begins, are almost complete.

With the new special economic zone, OBOR and the deep-sea port Kyaukphyu, China's influence is growing within Myanmar and the entire region. The Rakhine state could become one of the most important strategic centers for China and pave access to the Indian Ocean. It is in China's vital interest to restore and maintain the internal security of Myanmar to not endanger the economic Initiatives between Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (Bequelin 2017).

Numerous companies from Europe and Asia have invested in onshore projects and are involved in exploration. Different states are also interested in the mining of uranium deposits. For the USA, unrest and

pressure from the outside could delay or break off the negotiations with China and lead to a turn to the West. The conflict gets even more complexity due to rumours about insurgent connections to international drug trafficking.

In Myanmar the military have been grabbing huge pieces of land since the 1990s. Because of the military-economic interests, Rohingya have been expelled from their land. In the Rohingya area, more than 1.3 Million hectares of land has been allocated for corporate rural development recently and since 2012 the country was opened to foreign investors (The Guardian 2017). The Rakhine State is one of the poorest regions in the country, although it is rich in natural resources. The Burmese elite sees the Rohingya as an economic burden, and as competition for the few existing jobs as well as for opportunities to do business (Deutsche Welle 2015).

### Ecological impacts and new threats in summer 2018

The many areas now used as campsites had previously been pristine forests with wild elephants. The need for space and fuel-wood is resulting in continued cutting of trees and loss of biodiversity. Makeshift shelters on the hills are in danger of landslides during the monsoon season. Some shelters and roads were damaged already by

heavy rains. Fortunately, because of relocation of the most vulnerable families, building drains and training people in emergency management by Bangladesh government and international agencies, so far major catastrophes have been avoided (UNHCR 2018).

Waste management, water and sanitation are also rising concerns (figures 3 and 6). Indoor air pollution and fire hazards in the camps are addressed by setting up communal cooking places and raising awareness.

Local agriculture is increasingly negatively affected by loss of land, pollution, water crisis, thefts of produce and livestock, and falling market prices due to inflow of aid goods. Local people are growing more impatient by a worsening local economy: unemployment is raising, wages are decreasing (caused by illegal labour), less fishing opportunities in Naf river due to Myanmar military patrols, raising costs for transport, house renting and firewood, road damage by heavy trucks of aid organisations. There are security concerns since there is hardly any police presence at night and woman trafficking, prostitution and drug trade is increasing. Finally, the education of local children is negatively affected due to less available transportation to schools and the departure of teachers for better paid relief jobs (COAST, 2018).

## Conclusion and outlook

The conflict is neither new nor exclusively a religious problem. Complex political and economic reasons are important underlying factors. There is obviously a deep-rooted islamophobia within the population of Myanmar. In general, Muslims are perceived as a threat to the Buddhist culture and society in Myanmar, and this is fuelled by interests of different groups. Economic aspects are important as well: despite its abundant resources, the Rakhine State is one of the poorest regions in the country. The Rohingya are considered as an economic burden and as a competition for business and the few existing jobs.

Many international observers and scientists assume that the Rohingya conflict is the result of the geopolitical interests of external global players (Zoglul Kamal 2017).

Recent surveys show that the refugees are afraid of returning. They feel they belong to Myanmar, but they do not want to be repatriated by coercion and hope for security and equal civil rights. They are pleased about the reception in Bangladesh but demand from the government a resolution of security issues such as sexual violence and human trafficking, which are not included in the bilateral agreement (Amnesty International 2017; OXFAM 2017). In January 2018, refugees submitted a letter to the UN special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar stating several demands in the event of repatriation, including citizenship, equal rights, justice and return of their land (Farzana 2018). Former Rohingya villages are meanwhile replaced by military bases and settlements for other people (Amnesty International 2018). Any repatriation in the near future seems quite impossible.

Other solutions, such as an autonomous region in Rakhine state or distributing refugees to various countries, are equally problematic. To resettle in a special region, the Government of Myanmar must solve the citizenship issue first. Third country

resettlement cannot be negotiated between Bangladesh and Myanmar and they cannot compel a third country to accept them (Farzana 2018). At the time of writing, no solution of the crisis is in sight. Therefore, further analysis is needed to find practical approaches for either repatriation or finding new living spaces for the Rohingya.

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## Timeline: Densification of the urban fabric in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's economic hub and its first mega city, endures dynamic construction activities. The time line photo series shows the development of the new urban area of Vinhomes Central Park. The area includes Vietnam's recently completed and highest skyscraper, the Vincom Landmark 81 with a height of 461.2 metres and 81 storeys. The living density of the whole site is now extremely high. How to resolve the issue of urban transportation remains unclear. Looking at the informal low-rise settlements surrounding the new developments provide a good example for socio-spatial fragmentation.



Source: Text & photos: Michael Waibel.



# Participation of Kanak communities in the Koniambo project: the role of subcontracting

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**Abstract:** Nickel mining is a field of political contention in New Caledonia. The government of the Northern Province, dominated by indigenous Kanak people, wants to use the nickel sector as an instrument for political and economic emancipation from France. The Koniambo project is a large nickel mine and processing plant run by a joint venture (Koniambo Nickel SAS, KNS) including the holding company SMSP (51% shareholder) and the Swiss group Glencore (49%). In addition to growing local employment and public shareholding, the project is an anchor for jobs and regional economic development for Kanak people, without involving pro-French corporate or government interests. Local people are, therefore, encouraged to work and develop the project in and around the mine.

This paper looks more deeply at local subcontracting around Koniambo, and whether it is a sustainable means for local communities to engage in large-scale mining projects. The results show that small companies mostly work in the domains of earth works, transport and waste management. Many local businesspeople found it hard to sustain their activities after the end of the construction phase of the nickel smelter, or to make contracts and operate outside the mining sector. The social embeddedness of economic activities in local contexts is a key issue for the success of business activities. On the one hand, business development is a chance to generate wealth, but on the other hand, it widens social disparities. The rapid introduction of competitive economic behavior in Kanak society had led to tensions and conflicts between local businesspeople.

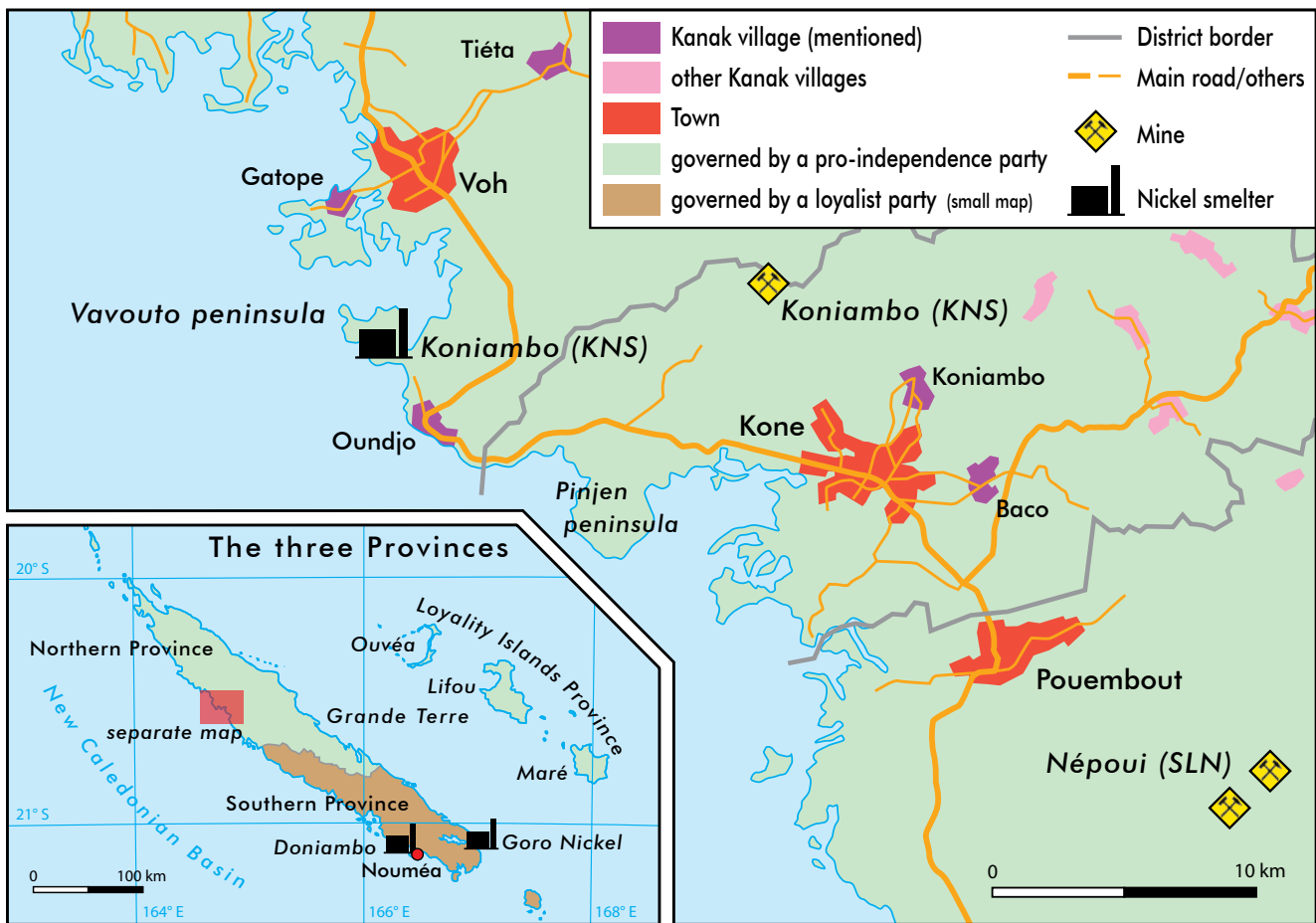
**Keywords:** Subcontracting, New Caledonia, large-scale mining, indigenous entrepreneurship, social embeddedness

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New Caledonia has experienced several boom and bust cycles of nickel mining, but like in many other global projects the affected local communities rarely obtained substantial long-term benefits. The history of the Koniambo project in northern New Caledonia can be interpreted as a kind of materialization of the long lasting struggle for political independence of the indigenous Kanak people. It represents an example of how indigenous communities actively engage with the mining sector to use resource extraction as a vehicle for economic as well as political emancipation. This arrangement paved the way for the Kanaks to actively participate in nickel mining, the country's most important economic sector. The strong symbolic value of the Koniambo project for Kanak people originates from their historical marginalization during colonial rule from any economic development activities. The consequences are still apparent in the political economy of the country, such as the prevailing socio-spatial imbalances between the highly urbanized capital Noumea, located in the South, and the "rest" of the country, called "brousse" by New Caledonians (Fig. 2). In contrast to other global mining contexts the Koniambo project is supposed to support the Kanak independence movement in getting economic emancipation that is necessary for a future political independence (Fisher 2013; Kowasch 2010; Pitoiset and Wéry 2008).

Figure 1: The Koniambo project in northern New Caledonia: nickel smelter and conveyor.



Source: DITTT 2007. Cartography: Claus Carstens, Department of Geography, Hamburg University, 2018.

Figure 2: Nickel mining and processing in New Caledonia and the VKP area including studied Kanak villages.

In addition to direct and indirect employment or shareholding, subcontracting represents a way to participate and to benefit from mining projects (Banks, 1996; Le Meur et al., 2012). Subcontracting associated with the Koniambo project leads to general questions about who controls the mining benefits, which has economic and political importance for the society. Thus, it goes beyond the widespread procedure in Melanesia of offering compensation and royalty payments to landowners and links the access to mining rents to notions of recognition, identity politics and sovereignty (Le Meur et al. 2012). Local subcontracting therefore represents a process of negotiation and is situated between circulation of rent and local governance (ibid. 2012). Rather than examining subcontracting just from an economic angle, individual economic trajectories should be placed in a wider context of social and political relations. In addition, individual entrepreneurship needs to be situated in a “tribal” or customary environment (ibid. 2012: 8). This implies the necessity to fully examine the “cultural, economic, agro-ecological, and

socio-political contexts” (Bebbington 1996: 88) of local people’s engagement with development projects or capitalism in general.

Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to analyze the concept of local subcontracting as a sustainable means for local communities to engage in large-scale mining projects, based on insights from the Koniambo project in northern New Caledonia (Fig. 1).

### Development and political emancipation in New Caledonia

The struggle for political emancipation and economic development are closely linked in New Caledonia. The country’s economy has always relied on the nickel sector (Kowasch 2010; 2018). However, mining was not initially a primary target of the independence movement (Horowitz 2003; Kowasch 2010; Pitoiset and Wéry 2008).

According to the French economist Jean Freyss, the intended “integration” of the Kanaks into the Caledonian economy “was to be accomplished without changing relationships of

dominance and subordination, or accounting for political and cultural dimensions of the problem” (1995: 35). In fact, the economy became heavily dependent on financial aid from France and steadily lost its base for self-reliance. Kanak independence leaders were aware of the problems of such an “assisted economy” (ibid.: 32) and argued that endogenous economic development should be a prerequisite for independence and political autonomy, and vice versa (ibid. 1995; Pitoiset and Wéry 2008).

Early attempts to implement rural development projects showed that Kanak peoples had an “aptitude for change” (Freyss 1995: 14) and disproved general assumptions about their incapability to manage business enterprises. However, during the nickel boom from 1967 to 1971, French immigrants were responsible for most of the increasing number of new businesses established in the nickel sector; none of these companies were led by Kanaks (Freyss 1995; Le Meur et al. 2012). As a result of the Matignon Agreements in 1988, the Kanak independence movement articulated

a demand to participate in the mining sector (Kowasch 2010; Pitoiset and Wéry 2008). The acquisition of the local mining company SMSP (Société Minière du Sud Pacifique) in 1990 represented the beginning of a paradigm shift by the independence movement: From “utopie Kanak ruraliste” to “utopie industrielle” (Le Meur et al. 2012). Independence leaders and SMSP negotiated a new mining deal (Carnuccini and Guillaud 1999; Grochain 2013; Horowitz 2003; Kowasch 2010; Kowasch 2018; Pitoiset and Wéry 2008) that led to the Bercy agreement in 1996. With the help of the French government, SMSP swapped mining titles with the French mining company SLN (Société Le Nickel), exchanging the remote northern Poum massif for the Koniambo massif (with additional financial compensation). Kowasch et al. (2015: 9) highlight that the national French government wanted the negotiations between SMSP and Eramet (the mother company of SLN) to be successful: “The French state wanted the negotiations to succeed, New Caledonia needed political stability, and the guaranteed access to nickel resources was a condition of the independence movement for continuing negotiations with the loyalists.” The exchange of mining titles allowed SMSP and its industrial partner, the Canadian group Falconbridge (later taken over by Xstrata, then Glencore) to supply a future nickel smelter with enough local nickel ores.

Today the shareholders of the Koniambo project are the SMSP (51%) and the Swiss group Glencore (49%), working in the joint-venture KNS (Koniambo Nickel SAS), which operates the project (Fig. 2). The SMSP is now a company in the ownership of the Northern Province, governed by PALIKA (Parti de libération kanak) that invests in diverse economic sectors.

Mining development accelerated the qualification of Kanak entrepreneurs: An example is the correlation between the acquisition of two mines by SMSP in 1991 (Nakéty) and in 1992 (Boakaine) in the municipality of Canala, which is located at the East Coast of New Caledonia, and the emergence of subcontracting activities of neighboring Kanak communities (Le Meur et al. 2012).

In case of Koniambo, the Northern Province is not only directly involved in the project via shareholding, it also encourages local communities to participate. Thus, the creation of local subcontracting companies is supported by political independence leaders in the North. Before discussing the issue of subcontracting in the frame of Koniambo, I would like to present the methods that I used during my fieldwork in the Northern Province in 2016.

### Methods

The background of this article was the motivation to analyze the socio-economic impacts of the Koniambo project on the local population three years after the inauguration of the nickel smelter. It was part of a research project initiated by the department of community relations at KNS and conducted by the Department of Geography at University of Bremen (Germany). In collaboration with a student from University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 (France) and the support of two local students, a survey was carried out in surrounding Kanak villages. Primary concerns dealt with the opinions and attitudes towards the Koniambo project as well as local development processes. In addition, we did expert interviews with businessmen mostly of Kanak origin, customary authorities and representatives of public institutions. This twofold approach deepened our understanding of the ways how the local population participates in and perceives the Koniambo project in this early operational phase. The survey happened in five different villages in Voh-Koné-Pouembout (VKP) region, selected for their proximity to the processing plant and the Koniambo massif. The two villages Baco and Koniambo belong to the district of Koné, and the villages Gatope, Tiéta and Oundjo to the district of Voh (Fig. 2).

During the 4-months-fieldwork, I lived in the village of Baco (Fig. 2 and 3). The survey contained a standardized questionnaire with closed and open questions. Most interviews were conducted randomly in the villages, except the local entrepreneurs, which we tried to contact in advance. In total 186 people participated, whereas 43 people were entrepreneurs.

### Subcontracting for Koniambo

According to Leblic (1993), the demand for subcontracting in the mining sector has grown since the 1990s and increased due to the recent construction of two major metallurgical projects: Goro Nickel in the South and Koniambo in the North (Fig. 2). The number of companies in the Northern Province amounted to nearly 300 in 1995, whereas more than 550 were registered in 2008 (Northern Province 2013: 35; Kowasch 2017: 113). This development was not just a result of the Koniambo project, but a general dynamic of new business creation due to mining development.

### Organisation and development of subcontracting for KNS

From 1998 to 2009, nearly 90 subcontracting companies were founded to service the Koniambo project, most of them with the support of KNS (Kowasch and Holtz 2014; Le Meur et al. 2012). In the early construction phase, in October 2008, local subcontractors created, with the help of KNS, a participative structure called SAS Vavouto. Its role was firstly to integrate local communities in the economic development of the VKP area and to distribute mining rents (Le Meur et al. 2012). Secondly, the SAS Vavouto is a kind of “umbrella company” federating a certain number of local businesses; it acts as a mediator between KNS and local entrepreneurs, seeking to promote the development of local businesses and equal distribution of subcontracting contracts (Kowasch 2010). The management was assisted by a technical committee of four to nine members of the Bureau of Northern Enterprises (BEN), which mostly comprises small enterprises in the North specialized in construction, earthworks and transport (ibid 2010: 367).

At the end of the construction phase and the commissioning of the Koniambo smelter, a “wave of demobilization” hindered the economic and entrepreneurial dynamic. Consequently, the demand for unskilled labor declined rapidly and instead, highly professionalized employees and subcontractors were required. While the SAS Vavouto represented nearly 190 subcontracting companies in the Northern Province in 2014, only few local subcontractors

were able to keep contracts with KNS afterwards (Grochain 2013).

### Spatial distribution of sub-contracting

In the beginning, the euphoria to participate in the Koniambo project was immense among the local population. There was a high influx and circulation of money in the local economy and a long-standing flow of migrant laborers. Many locals wanted to swim with the tide because the project generated new income opportunities. Nevertheless, distributional inequalities and conflicts about costs and benefits, amplified thorough the demobilization, occurred. Comparing the different Kanak villages in the vicinity of the nickel smelter, a sort of “fragmented development” is apparent (Kowasch 2017: 121), illustrated by the heterogeneous distribution of entrepreneurs (Fig. 4).

The village of Oundjo (Fig. 5), for example, despite its size and proximity to the factory, shows little entrepreneurial activity. The reason dates back to even before the construction phase, when initially the Pinjen peninsula, south of Oundjo (Fig. 2), was chosen as a good location for the Koniambo smelter. Disagreement between proponents and opponents of developing this site triggered tensions, some originating from the colonial period, and resulted in social friction between the inhabitants of the village (Horowitz 2003; Kowasch 2010; 2017). Besides a few beneficiaries, the village still lacks economic dynamism and there are a lot of people without fixed incomes compared to the other villages. Most entrepreneurs are found in Baco, because of its proximity to the town of Koné and its good transport links. Moreover, Baco already had good economic structures prior to the construction of the smelter (Kowasch 2010). The villages of Gatope and Tieta also show a strong entrepreneurial dynamism, whereas Koniambo is less involved. To explain the differences in entrepreneurial dynamism, existing inequalities in the time before the implementation of the Koniambo project and the social cohesion within the villages play a crucial role. Furthermore, economic development is embedded in a post-colonial context, hence social and political distortions resulting from the colonial period have also to be considered. Inequalities and conflicts



Soruce: Kowasch 2007.

Figure 3: Village of Baco, with market place.

about costs and benefits induced by the Koniambo project are amplified due to the limitedness of mining development and, in a more concrete timeframe, to the demobilization after the end of the construction phase.

### Domains of subcontracting

The construction phase of a large-scale mining project requires vast financial investments and a large labor force, offering a great range of activities for unskilled workers and entrepreneurs. Earthworks (10 answers), personal transport (9) and construction (8) represent the most common activity sectors of the interviewed entrepreneurs (Fig. 6).

During the construction phase of the smelter the demand for these sorts of business enterprises was high and led to a competition of business creations and market shares among local communities. The sustainability of this entrepreneurial endeavor depends referring to Curry (2005) on the likelihood of the enterprises to generate long-term financial returns for the community in respect to

social obligations. The most common working areas listed above are according to Curry’s typology of business enterprises, particularly vulnerable to insolvency (ibid. 2005). They are often difficult to sustain because proportions of surplus generated must be retained for maintenance and reinvestment. In general, many subcontracting businesses only remain viable through extern services like advice, financial support and inputs from the mining company and public institutions. In indigenous contexts, local entrepreneurs not only have to respond to demands from the local economy, but have also to meet non-market objectives.

### Embeddedness of sub-contracting in community structures

Subcontracting and local business development related to the Koniambo project induced a transition process from mostly smallholders to entrepreneurs among the local communities. Eventually, many of them were not capable of managing

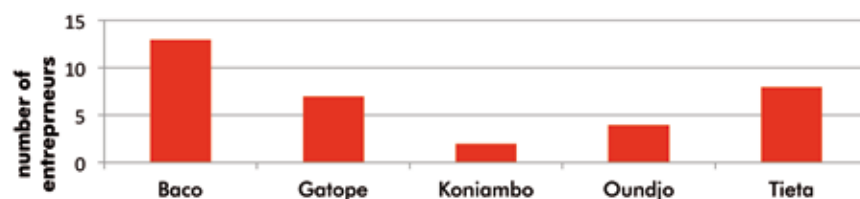


Figure 4: Distribution of entrepreneurs between studied Kanak villages.

Soruce: Rosner et al. 2016.

Source: Kowasch 2009.



Figure 5: Dock for boats in Oundjo.

their businesses profitably and did not anticipate the period after the construction of the smelter. The majority did not evolve and diversify their economic activities but instead expected a continuous flow of money and contracts. According to Luc Bataillé, director of the local structure Cellule Koniambo, many local subcontractors considered themselves as “chef d’entreprise” but effectively the SAS Vavouto was in charge of managing and distributing the contracts to the local subcontractors who “just did the work” (Interview 2016). However, the failure of many entrepreneurs is not just explained by a lack of economic behaviour or rationality but bears a social implication.

Historically individual entrepreneurship and profit making have been often considered as “colonial” by Kanak communities (Kowasch 2012)

as the idea of individual wealth accumulation opposes traditional and “communitarian” Kanak values (Winslow 1995; Horowitz 2003). Nonetheless, since then many Kanaks have become entrepreneurs, especially in the context of the mining sector. The underlying motivations to engage in the Koniambo project as subcontractor are manifold, according to Grochain (2013): First of all, the political and symbolic meaning of the project endows a sort of common identity among the local Kanak communities of the VKP area and beyond. Secondly, economic interests and profit incentives are important, especially for those who already possess entrepreneurial experiences. Thirdly, the recognition of customary alienation to land play a crucial role for the distribution of subcontracting contracts and eventually, “people

became aware of the need to ‘make money’ from the presence of the mine” (Bainton and Macintyre 2013: 161). In contrast to paternalistic beliefs, local communities indeed hope to ameliorate their standard of living and seek to accumulate material wealth from engaging with the cash economy. However, they prefer to pursue new ideals of economic and social relations (Curry and Koczberski 2013).

The nature and purpose of customary exchange shapes people’s engagement with the market economy: Whereas the transaction of commodities is based on the exchange of full ownership of an object between individuals, the exchange of donations constitutes a social act that relies on social relationships (Fig. 7). Therefore local business enterprises often do not run profitably in a market sense, but contribute in generating social recognition and prestige for their owners (Curry 2005). This exemplifies that people’s engagement with capitalism is shaped by “place-based conceptions of economy and society” (Curry and Koczberski 2013: 342). The recognition of the “embeddedness” of local economic activities and the specific rationales of local entrepreneurs leads to a better explanation of the failure (and success) of development projects in rural environments (Banks 2007). In case of the Koniambo project this is articulated by the desire to accumulate power and prestige by taking several

Source: Rosner et al. 2016.

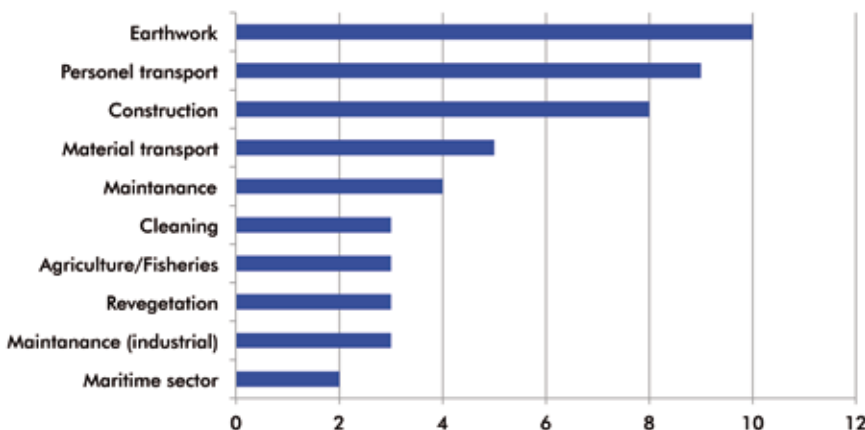


Figure 6: Activities of businesses selected (several answers possible).



positions (entrepreneur, deputy in the local parliament and customary chief for example) (Kowasch and Holtz 2014).

Referring to examples from Papua New Guinea, Bainton and Macintyre (2013: 161) shape the term “prestige economy”. Managing his/her own business represents one’s “success in engaging with the modern world” (Curry 2005: 238). The authors highlight that engagement with capitalism often arises from an “opportunity” rather than being a “necessity” for local entrepreneurs (Bainton and Macintyre 2013: 142). They do not rely exclusively on these businesses or on the local exchange economy. Therefore, they follow different rationales and have different expectations from their engagement. According to Curry (2005), there are three main constraints that have to be considered in the context of “indigenous entrepreneurship” that influence local social and economic practices. First, profit and consumption in a market-based sense are not of primary interest but are seen as means to an end. Second, the pooling of capital and labor creates and strengthens social relationships. Third, custom and customary exchange are important determinants of life quality. Curry concludes: “Thus, investments of capital are not often in anticipation of future profits - rather, they are an investment in social relationships” (2005: 237). Bainton and Macintyre (2013: 142) explain that the distinction between “opportunity entrepreneur” and “necessity entrepreneur” results from the everlasting expectation from landowners for privileged business opportunities. In this vein this is an extension of an existing national “ideology of landownership” which is frequently manifested in rent-seeking behaviour (Filer 1997; In: Bainton and Macintyre: 142). Aspirations for development are understood as compensation that is translated through business creations (ibid. 2013).

### Tensions and conflicts

In Melanesia, local businesses are characterized by their territorialized imprint. There is a close relationship between capitalist engagement and land claims for prestige and power (Curry 2005; Bainton and Macintyre 2013). These sources of inter-



Figure 7: Customary ceremony in Baco, businesspeople often contribute to donations with supermarket products.

Source: Kowasch 2009.

and intra-community conflicts are “elements of Melanesian society that menace the mining industry” (Filer 1997; in Bainton and Macintyre 2013: 142). Bainton and Macintyre (2013: 149) analyse the competitive economic behaviour:

“Despite public appeals to custom and equality, in practice competitive economic behaviour has become completely normalized. But ultimately there is a contradictory process at play: as leaders externally proclaim the importance and unity of the community in moral opposition to corporate profit maximizing motives, this masks the internal divisions that are exacerbated through daily actions and the pursuit of new economic opportunities.”

Performing cultural integrity aims at the own distinctiveness compared to “outsiders” like external companies, which also seek to get subcontracting contracts. It should also strengthen the bargaining power with the mining operator. Figure 9 shows a strike in 2008 of local businesspeople to

get contracts within the Koniambo project: “Manque de consideration envers les entreprises du Nord” (Lack of consideration of the enterprises of the North). This was the incentive for the creation of the SAS Vavouto (Grochain 2013).

Tensions and conflicts over business contracts and prestige within the community are also illustrated by the split of the “umbrella company” SAS Vavouto in November 2014. The legitimacy of the president, who was not elected but chosen due to his customary position, was challenged by accusations of corruption and patronage. Following his dismissal, he founded a competing structure with the same objectives: SAS Vook. Many local entrepreneurs regret the split of the two structures because its aim was to distribute contracts equally to small local businesses and to preserve the “traditional order”. Now the competition between the two “umbrella companies” allows KNS to choose and to award contracts to the most competitive. The mining

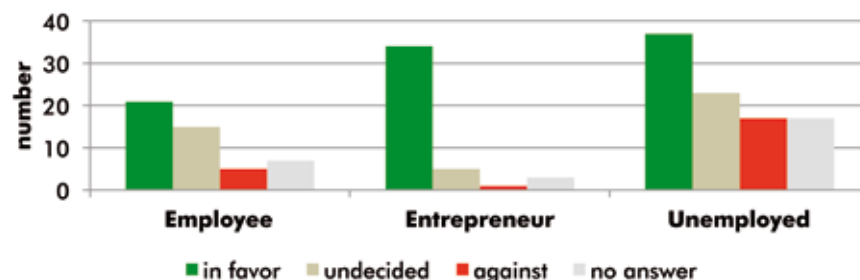


Figure 8: Comparison between perception of Koniambo project and professional situation of interviewees.

Source: Rosner et al. 2016.

operator thus benefits from this new constellation, but at the expense of harmonious relations among local entrepreneurs.

The Koniambo project promised long-term benefits for local Kanak communities; however, development and socio-economic disparities coexist. The survey showed that a majority of Kanak people are still in favor of 'their project'. The struggle for employment and business opportunities within the Koniambo project resulted mostly in "individual entrepreneurship" and hindered the emergence of collective development projects. Internal discord and problems about the distribution of benefits and costs occurred; even favoritism was denounced in few discussions with locals. Therefore, the perception of the Koniambo project among Kanak village people varies in relation to their professional situation. Compared to employees and unemployed people, entrepreneurs have a more positive opinion of the project (Fig. 8).

A necessity remains to further scrutinize the role of subcontracting as a sustainable means for local communities to engage in the Koniambo project. Generally business creations in the context of large-scale mining projects are structurally different from non-resource based development projects because they are embedded in a more dependent and client-based approach to capitalism (Bainton and Macintyre 2013). Those subcontracting entrepreneurs are not fully independent and autonomous in matters of decision making related to the mining operator and to their social context (Le Meur et al. 2012). They have to compete with international companies and more experienced businessmen from Noumea. After the demobilization process, several businesspeople encountered financial difficulties. Their dependency on the SAS Vavouto as mediator between them and the mining operator KNS hindered their own economic involvement. Hence, a majority of people were not able to get contracts beyond the mining industry

Additionally, the desire for change is mostly driven by political elites and ambitious landowners (see Bainton and Macintyre 2013). Therefore, the will to actively participate in the project differs among the local population; especially younger and higher qualified

persons were not favorable to participate in subcontracting because they might have priority in better paid employment with KNS or beyond the extractive industry (Rosner et al. 2016).

## Conclusion

The VKP area is experiencing a deep socio-economic transformation process, which on one side generates wealth accumulation and an improvement of living standards. New incomes from mining jobs and subcontracting play an important role in wealth creation. On the other side, however, socio-spatial disparities widen (Kowasch 2018). Despite its geopolitical intentions and its symbolic meaning, the Koniambo project has led to dependency on resource extraction and to some extent financial support from the national government and France (Lassila 2016). This hinders the aim of gaining economic and political emancipation and reduces the potential for political protests (Horowitz 2003). Lassila (2016: 385) draws on the image of an "anti-politics machine" (Ferguson 1990): the political ideals represented by the Koniambo project are obscured by bureaucratic and technical issues through its focus on economic goals. However, contrary to the image of an all-powerful capitalism that transforms "traditional" noncapitalist economies, the embeddedness of economic activities such as indigenous subcontracting in cultural and customary contexts has the capacity to shape project outcomes (Curry 2005). The incentives for Kanak people to engage in business development are not solely driven by the desire to accumulate benefits. Through their involvement in extractive industry, customary representatives seek to obtain recognition from the mining operator, public authorities and other clans. This shift from royalties and compensation payments to "commercial participation" (Bainton and Macintyre 2013: 159) is inalienably linked to conflicts over customary land legitimacy. Hence, competition and conflicts over the distribution of business opportunities is a "site of fission and conflict" (ibid.: 158). Exemplified by the rupture of the SAS Vavouto, the prevalence of an individual business model based on notions of prestige and diverging

interests impedes subcontractors from collaborating; it opposes intercommunity solidarity.

Whether local subcontracting and the Koniambo project in general will contribute to a viable economic development is not yet clear (Kowasch 2010; 2017). The sustainability of local business enterprises depends on considerations of the cultural embeddedness of subcontracting and the motivation and adaptability of local businesspeople. From a more critical perspective on mining projects, Gilberthorpe and Rajak (2017) argue further that the distribution of benefits and costs as well as unequal power asymmetries between different actors need to be re-politicized to meet the objectives of a "sustainable development". Indigenous communities need to have the capacity to decide what kind of development model they want to pursue. This articulation of local agency represents a starting point for "innovative cultural reflexes" (Bainton and Macintyre 2013: 142) towards large-scale mining projects.

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Source: Kowasch 2008.

**Figure 9: Strike of local businesspeople in front of the government buildings of the Northern Province**

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# Forms of Violence and Discrimination against Women in Papua New Guinea

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**Abstract:** Gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive and enduring in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Women and girls in this country are to a large extent exposed to sexual assault, rape and domestic violence in urban and rural areas. Once affected, they get only little attention and support, let alone justice. Asking what triggers violence against women in PNG this paper examines the different forms, causes and reasons of GBV. It highlights PNG-specific forms of violence against women. From the analysis of GBV it argues that violence is deeply rooted in PNG societies and widely accepted. Understanding GBV is of great importance for counteraction as the government, churches and various NGOs now run programs to improve the situation for women, but measures do not show the necessary impacts, because they do not address the profoundness and complexity of GBV in PNG.

**Keywords:** Gender-based violence, GBV, structural violence, bride price, polygamy, sorcery, triggers and causes of violence, witch-hunt, Papua New Guinea, PNG

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Gender-based violence (GBV) against women is a human rights violation experienced by women in all countries and cultures. In Papua New Guinea (PNG) this is particularly pervasive (Biersack 2016). For example, a young woman who had just survived a mass rape said “We are growing up with [the anticipation that] this is happening to us. I survived it and that’s the most important thing” (Struck-Garbe, 1999). She did not want to go to the police and report the case, having no confidence in the police. She expected her brothers and cousins to take revenge. She had left her fiancée, who had avenged himself in this brutal way. This is neither a statement nor a case of singularity. Violence and especially GBV is a part of everyday life, widely tolerated and accepted. About two thirds of the women in PNG are subject to abuse relative to a world average of one third of women (Tatsi, 2018). In order to find appropriate countermeasures and solutions to GBV in PNG the issue must be thoroughly understood. Therefore, this research note focuses on forms, causes and reasons for GBV. We ask what triggers violence against women in PNG? It is our intention to raise awareness on the topic and shed light on the mechanisms behind it.

Due to limitations of space this article will fall short in several regards. With more than 800 different ethnic groups in the country, we strongly generalize statements on the status of women, especially since tradition and societal changes through colonization and up until now are touched far too briefly to gain a thorough understanding. Also, important issues such as the implicit predominant dualistic gender understanding or concepts of gender roles cannot be addressed. While an overview of forms of GBV, causes and reasons are provided, we do not identify recommendations to tackle this issue.



Figure 1: Chis Kauwe: Domestic violence

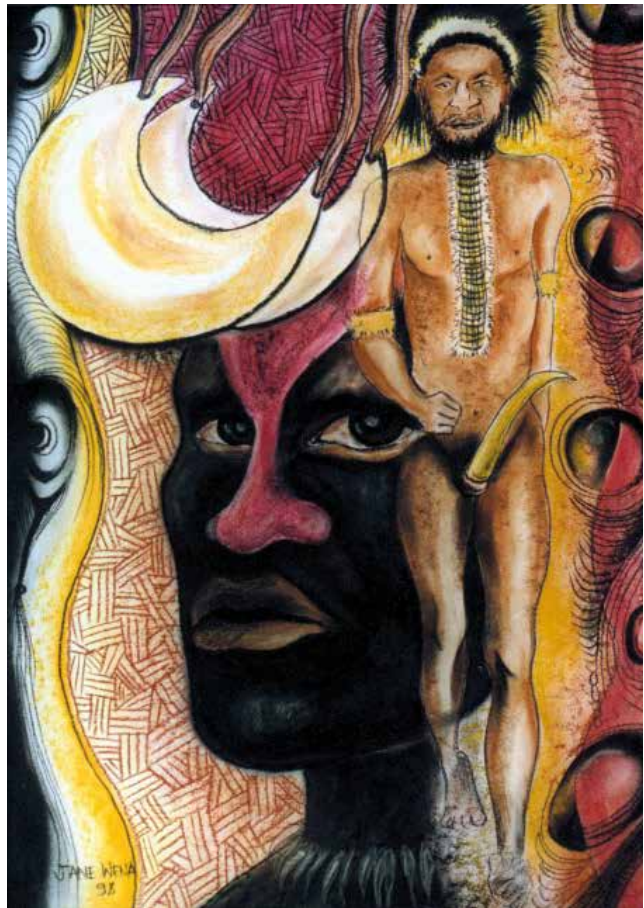


Figure 2: Jane Wena: The power of man

### Definition

For this research the understanding of violence against women is based on the United Nations definition: “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (United Nations, 1993). This is a very broad understanding of the term, including self-directed violence such as self-harm, interpersonal violence such as homebased physical or psychological violence, and collective violence such as economic violence or structural violence - avoidable impairments of fundamental human needs by society (Galtung, 1975). All of these potential categorizations of violence overlap or intertwine and rarely occur isolated. For example, physical harm can hinder labour and thus lead to economic damage. This should be kept in mind for the following analysis of violence in which the primary focus is on collective violence and the structural reasons behind it.

### Systematic Gender-based Violence

Women in PNG are systematically disadvantaged in the economy, education and health for social and cultural reasons.

Women and girls are often barred from attending school since they are demanded to do housework, gardening and child care. 64% of women are literate opposed to 69% (2000) of men (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010). At the University only 35% of the enrolled students are women (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2010). In many cases, girls finally leave school at the age of fifteen. There are several further reasons for girls to drop out of school. First, there are not enough schools in rural areas (about 85% of the population still lives in the countryside). Thus, education often involves long journeys to school, during which they may be threatened with sexual and physical violence. Second, many girls are sexually molested by their male classmates. The teachers often do little against this or even participate in the abuses (Wilson, 2012). Third, there is a lack of sanitary conditions or missing accommodation

at schools and universities. Fourth, parents are not interested in providing girls with higher education and/or they do not have enough money to pay for it. Fifth, girls marry at a young age and often have children early (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2009).

These unequal educational opportunities also contribute to limiting the economic possibilities of women. Women are responsible for the domestic sphere, for subsistence farming and breeding of livestock, thus for the nutrition of the family. As they receive no salary for this work, many women sell their agricultural or artisanal products on local markets to have at least some cash at their disposal. Although the vast majority of women farm the land, they generally have neither land ownership nor land use rights. Land is owned by clans and is assigned to their husbands. In the event of separation, or if the clan chief leases or sells the land, they lose the gardening opportunities they need to survive and depend on relatives to support them. In the formal work sector and in leadership positions women are barely represented. 24%



Figure 3: Gazellah Bruder: The freedom to speak out

of women work in the formal sector, whereas 40% of men do (Government of Papua New Guinea-Development Partners Gender Forum, 2012). Few women are also active in politics, and if they are, they have little chance of getting an elected position. In the election in 2017, no women made it into parliament. It becomes clear here that the majority of women are excluded from the formal economy and leadership of the country.

Another form of structural violence is the inadequate health system. Lack of medical care, especially in rural areas, leads to an extremely high maternal mortality rate, because more than half of women do not have access to medical care or accompaniment during childbirth. While the birthrate in 2016 was 3.7 (World Bank, 2018), the official maternal mortality rate was 0.22% in 2015 (ibid, 2018). Only 53% of childbirths in 2006 have been conducted by a midwife or an obstetrician (Government of Papua

New Guinea-Development Partners Gender Forum, 2012). However, under the 2006 Demographic Health Survey the rate was as high as 0.73% (ibid, 2012).

Women in PNG often do not reach the age of 70 (World Bank, 2018) due to extreme workload, poor diet, poor access to clean water, poor health care, many pregnancies, and physical and psychological GBV.

### **PNG Specific Forms of Violence against Women**

In the following section, we examine some PNG specific forms of GBV, which are particularly important to understand violence against women.

Marriage requires the payment of a bride price. This originally important tradition for maintaining balance between two different groups did degenerate to a purchase price. Men feel that they are the owners of their wives and their bodies, and hence believe they have the right to control

their wives and abuse them. The ownership of women is particularly evident when women are given away as part of compensation payments (Dickson-Waiko, 2001). The bride price makes it difficult for the women to divorce, because it would have to be repaid then. This rule often prevents parents from taking their daughters back as women usually move to their husband's family. There they normally have no land and no right to it. Thus, when they break up, they stand without land and cannot feed themselves.

Also, financially they are not secured; they could indeed sue for support, but that will most likely not be paid. Living alone is not common. There are only a handful of very few lone women living in major cities – often bringing male relatives home for protection or employing a security guard (Macintyre and Spark 2017; Spark, 2017). To make matters worse in a possible separation, children from a marriage remain in the family of the man; therefore women who leave their husbands lose custody of their children. This causes women to stay with their violent husband (Human Rights Report, 2015).

Furthermore, polygamy is possible, mostly for men with assets who can afford to pay corresponding bride prices. Although this may have made sense in the traditional social context, today this regulation is abused. It often happens that men who move to another location due to their work (in the mines) marry another wife there, not caring about the women and children left behind. When women try to protest, this often leads to violence - on both sides. Also, when several women live together in a polygamous marriage, it is rarely peaceful. According to Lady Hannah Dadae (2018), half of all female prison inmates are murderers of other women.

Another PNG-specific form of structural violence comes with the institution of village courts. Village judges take decisions on local and family matters such as bride price, custody of children and non-violent, low-threshold criminal acts. They generally follow traditional restorative rights that still exist and they are funded by the state (with 14,000 councillors and 600,000 cases a year). Lacking sensitivity in cases of familial and sexual violence among the almost entirely male members of the courts leads to the trivialization of domestic



Figure 4: Alexander Mebri: Culture Heritage

violence as family disputes, which just require compensation payments. Reconciliation is the focus, which means the man is admonished not to do this again and the wife is sent back to her tormentor without getting any support. Many judges also do not understand that women have to be protected from their husbands and assume that the woman have earned the beating due to misconduct.

Prostitution is illegal in PNG. According to Cassey (2015) the United Nations estimates two of three girls aged between 15 and 24 have prostituted themselves for money, food or shelter. They face high levels of discrimination and hate crime, while having no protection and no advocates. The risk of being raped seems especially great for prostitutes with 80% being sexually abused in 2009 (United States Agency for International Development, 2010). Thirty-five percent of prostitutes take alcohol or drugs while they engage in prostitution to better withstand

physical and mental stress. As they rarely use contraceptives they are much more likely to be infected with the HIV virus with 13% of prostitutes being tested positive (Cassey, 2015). Women are often denied medical care when the doctor learns how they earn their money (Stewart, 2014). Societal handling of prostitutes is a insidious form of structural violence. Child prostitution has also risen sharply in recent years by 30% (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013).

Sorcery accusation-based violence is a major problem in PNG, stemming from tradition and mostly affecting women. In contrast to the past so-called 'witches' are arbitrarily tortured and murdered in public nowadays. The previous Sorcery Act, which considered witchcraft real and allowed the courts to persecute culprits and murderers of accused witches, was only lifted in 2013 and the law change has hardly been enforced. Also, one can still be legally charged with witchcraft

at village courts (Village Courts Act 1989). In practice there are rarely legal consequences for witch-hunting in PNG. A 20-year-long study by the Australian National University of 1,440 cases of torture and 600 killings found less than one percent of perpetrators were successfully prosecuted (Neubauer, 2018). Accused witches are considered the causes of crop failures, unexpected deaths or serious illnesses. Behind the allegations and the murders of supposed witches are fears and also often the motive of enrichment (land or house). Very frequently, women who have little social protection like widows, become accused of sorcery. The belief in witchcraft and its pursuit is deeply rooted and widespread especially in the highlands, as well as within the police force and churches, which therefore are not providing effective protection.

### The 'Normality' of Violence

A key reason for violence against women that has been touched

subliminally throughout the discussion so far is the widespread acceptance of violence as a means of problem-solving or as an act of revenge. PNG has one of the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual abuse worldwide. It is often husbands and other male family members or neighbourhood men who use violence against women and girls. From 2009 to 2015, Doctors Without Borders treated around 28,000 female victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse (Doctors Without Borders, 2016). Many of the victims have reported that while they were beaten at home, family members watched and did nothing. Even if the act of violence happens in public, very rarely someone steps in because the majority of viewers assume that the woman has not behaved properly and deserves the beating. Few offenders are brought to justice. Violence against women and girls, including mass rapes, has increased in recent years, especially in the cities (Amnesty International, 2006). Here the perpetrators are so-called 'raskols', gangs of mostly unemployed young men who make their raids on markets and other public places, often targeting women and girls. As already discussed, for many women selling at the market is a necessity. According to a study, 55% of women (United Nations Women, 2014) were victims of violence in the marketplace. Note that the fear of spending time in public places restricts women's freedom of movement and freedom in general. Many girls grow up knowing they will one day experience violence or be raped. Witnessing violence as part of everyday life they expect that this will happen to them and are happy if they do not carry any major physical damage and survive the violence. This form of socialization leads to violence being accepted as part of society and considered normal.

In many PNG societies a male ideology is being propagated and perpetuated: women are dangerous, inferior and unreliable (and more recently became acquirable objects) (Biersack and Macintyre 2017; Gibbs, 2017). One must avoid women or keep them under control. This ideology (usually mediated by older men) legitimizes rape and physical violence as a means of controlling allegedly resistant women. In addition, men lose the status of youthfulness only with the marriage. They compete with old men

for potential second wives. Often the young men are the losers, because the old ones have the power and control over resources to generate money in the kinship network to pay the bride price (Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012). In urban areas, the frustrated young men join together to form gangs (raskols), which above all represent a violent ideology and in which the rape of women is part of a ritual of reception of young gang members. The pursuit of acceptance by other men, leads to sharing their partner with their friends; or, in tribal struggles, use violence against members of another family or clan or rape their wives. Violence is not just part of life for the poor or less educated in the countryside but also for the urban elite. Rape of women is justified with a desire to punish educated women or to punish a woman who has previously rejected the sexual advances of the offender. Empowerment of women does deprive men of their power to control women and their body. This seems to give rise to ego conflicts amongst men who vent their frustrations violently towards women (Biersack and Macintyre 2017; Gibbs, 2017).

Touching mainly on issues of physical violence so far, it should be mentioned that in regards to psychological consequences and psychological violence, it is almost impossible to receive psychological care. There are only three psychologists in the vast country who deal with the issues related to violence against women (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Since there is no data or more extensive information, it can only be surmised in what regard violence is a psychological burden on women.

### **Triggers of Interpersonal Gender-based Violence**

While discussing structural and economic violence against women in PNG, acts of interpersonal violence have often been mentioned. Sometimes the structural violence in form of a societal belief is the direct trigger for interpersonal violence; however, it seems important to mention some general triggers of acts of interpersonal violence in PNG. Violence is mainly triggered by poverty, materialistic desires and resulting tensions, and social stratification; male dominated society (further enforced through a male dominated Christian religion),

patriarchal customs and their modern deformations; self-esteem decrease and frustration; drugs and alcohol; reviving tribal conflicts; and self-justice and revenge (Chandler, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the diversity of reasons behind violence against women in PNG has been highlighted: reaching from structural violence in education, economy, health and life expectancy to an institutionalized culture of accepting and tolerating violence also including domestic violence, bride price, polygamy, unfit village courts, handling of prostitution and witch pursuit. As the forms and reasons of GBV in PNG show the issue is multi-layered and deeply entrenched. Even though GBV is pervasive and enduring in PNG, women are vulnerable and resilient at the same time. On different levels of engagement they work hard to make their communities safer places. But while prosecuting acts of violence is possible and increases, questions remain as how to outlaw a genuine belief in sorcery. In regards to GBV and sorcery almost 150 different organizations and the Government of PNG are trying to create awareness, but there is a crucial lack of service provision to affected women (Government of PNG, 2016).

If GBV is to be tackled in the long term, it needs responses adequate to its complexity and strong entrenchment in PNG societies. There are small steps happening, especially to achieve equality through women's economic advancement and empowerment, but PNG still has a long way to go to reach freedom of violence.

### **Acknowledgement**

The art illustrating this text is from contemporary PNG artists. Gazellah Bruder, Winnie Weoa, Jane Wena, Alexander Mebri and Chris Kauage are all born in the 1970th and they live in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea. Their works shown here were created between 1998 and 2007 and illustrate that gender relations – particularly male dominance – are a subject that is since long echoed in the arts. Especially in urban areas where contemporary modern art is located the changing traditional gender roles, GB violence and domestic violence are discursively taken up and visually highlighted.



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Figure 5: Winnie Weoa: Behind the fence

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Navigating Troubled Waters: The Ecumenical Movement in the Pacific Islands since the 1980s

*Hermann Mückler*

**A new book, edited by Manfred Ernst and Lydia Johnson, outlines the decline of cooperation among ecumenical churches in Oceania. Contributions by numerous authors shed light on the situation in the individual island states, point to causes and failures of the past and make recommendations for a future intensification of ecumenical cooperation. The book is both an inventory and a guide.**

Across the Pacific Islands, different churches compete for membership. The region is considered to be the most dynamic in the world in terms of competition between churches, resulting in various effects on the political and social life on all Pacific islands. The dynamism, however, is increasingly not one of cooperation of churches, but of competition. This book, launched in July 2017, looks at the tendency of declining cooperation in ecumenical movements and the differences and similarities in the work of different churches. At 584 pages, the seven authors of this volume – edited by Manfred Ernst and Lydia Johnson – succeed in providing a comprehensive and polyphonic picture of ecumenical cooperation in the Pacific, and the relationships between individual churches as well as between churches, state institutions and communities across the region. The book is the result of a research project spanning several years, endorsed by the Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) and implemented under the auspices of the Institute for Research and Social Analysis of the Pacific Theological College in Suva, Fiji. The trigger for the project and the resulting publication was the growing concern of Pacific Island Churches about the visible and increasing decline of ecumenical cooperation over the past three decades. The description and analysis of the history and current status of ecumenism in

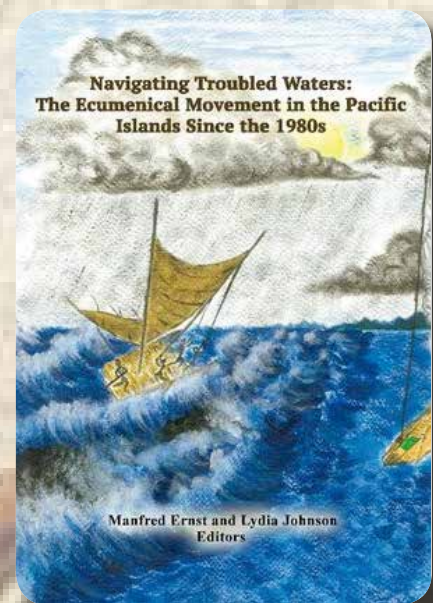
the Pacific Islands offers an important contribution to the global scholarship on the state of ecumenism. A strong ecumenical spirit emerged in the Pacific in the 1960s, but began to fade in the 1990s. Some of the mainline churches have quietly left the ecumenical movement and an increasing number of evangelical, fundamentalist, Pentecostal, charismatic and so-called ‘marginal Protestant’ churches have been growing at the expense of the established mainline Protestant and Catholic churches. This has contributed to the emergence of complex networks of transnational Pentecostal-charismatic-evangelical churches and so-called para-churches. They form together a renewal movement in which flows of people, money, ideas and images spread with increasing speed and intensity. The first contribution by Ann Anisi and Aisake Casimira highlight how this situation emerged; their work provides a historical overview of ecumenical formation and development, and addresses key turning points in church history, historical influences of the missionary period in the Pacific and the churches’ reaction to colonialism, but also the stimulus to become a global peace movement in the twentieth century and to act against the aberrations of rampant economic globalisation. Manfred Ernst gives an example with describing ecumenism in Fiji. Littered with tables and statistics, he highlights the impact

of the four coup d’etats and the dominant role of the PCC, which did not necessarily facilitate ecumenism. A survey confirmed the decline, but also provides recommendations such as to provide future church leaders training with skills and knowledge to perform fully their leadership tasks. Marana Gaston Taura’s contribution offers another example from French Polynesia. She describes the maohi perception of ecumenism and is more positive, concluding that there is healthy ecumenical interaction and practical cooperation at the grassroots level, especially in the Tuamotu archipelago and in the Marquesas Islands. However, her interviews reveal that family instability is one of the most critical and challenging issues today, caused by a number of factors including working migration that fracture families. Aisake Casimira focuses on Kiribati, describing in her article how ecumenism is part of the curriculum at Tangintebu Theological College, the Kiribati Uniting Church’s (KUC) theological school. Eckart Garbe describes the situation in Papua New Guinea (PNG), conveying an image of a country that is marked by many major problems, as education, health and infrastructure have not coped with the needs of a growing population. In PNG faith-organisations have focused on dialogue, creating ‘one voice,’ and joining together in coordinated action. Recommendations from Garbe’s work include to train clergy and key

laypeople in technical areas such as administration, operations, finance and management. Two more examples from Polynesia are from Feleterika Nokise, who describes the situation in American Samoa and underlines the lack of funds for the National Council of Churches, (NCC), and from Aisake Casimira who focuses on Tonga and recommends investing in the formation and training of youth and women on ecumenism. Glenine Hamlyn focuses on the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, revealing similar problems as observed in PNG. All contributions follow the

same structure: background about history, land and people, analysis of field research, issues and challenges, successes and failures, perspectives, and – most important – conclusions and recommendations. All authors identify pressing social problems, especially experienced by youth, and highlight the need for a restructure and major overhaul of ecumenical leadership. Most of the authors recommend the need for honest dialogue to serve as a bridge for faith-organisations to modernise, but lead to a process for reconciliation and re-envisioning of ecumenism.

The book is easy to read even for those who have little knowledge of the Pacific region, as each article is preceded by an introductory section on the region and a brief outline of recent history. The basic tenor of all texts is courageous and thus this book guarantees significant added value: it attempts to point out ways of solving the problems at hand. This book is highly recommended as not only an inventory, but also as a series of concrete proposals for solutions to contemporary challenges facing the Pacific, and the future shape of ecumenism in the region.



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## BOOK REVIEW

# The Souls of China: The Return of Religion after Mao

*Britta Schmitz*

Ever since Europe's Age of Enlightenment many regard a society without religion as the better, more peaceful one. However, a glance at Chinese history shows that this did not always prove true. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was without doubt one of the most radical and brutal fights against all religious beliefs and practices. Countless temples, mosques and churches were destroyed and countless people arrested for their spiritual beliefs. Countless were also the immaterial losses, nobody knows exactly how much of the spiritual and religious knowledge was lost forever, when pictures and scriptures were burned and chains of oral tradition were broken. Mao Zedong died in September 1976. His wife Jiang Qing and the other members of "Gang of Four" were arrested in October of the same year. But it took until 1982 for the Communist Party to publish "document 19" - an official directive on religions and how to deal with them. Only then were many religious experts released from prison or labor camps, and a renaissance of religious traditions could begin.

The relationship between government and religion was and still is a complicated one: While it is acknowledged that spiritual belief is to some extent indispensable for a nation, the party is at the same time afraid to lose control over the people. Religious groups are still seen as unwelcome competition to the Communist ideology. This often results in violent suppression. But the growing influence of religion can't be denied. Many Chinese people are searching for some kind of spiritual values; the end of extreme communism and Mao cult certainly left a vacuum which could not be filled by the ensuing frenetic materialism.

In his book "The Souls of China: The Return of Religion After Mao" Pulitzer prize winning writer and journalist Ian Johnson follows a cast of activists from different religious groups. The work is the result of fifteen years of researching and travelling in China. On his travels across China the author is not just observing his protagonists' spiritual activities, but actively taking part in them. Through the very personal narratives we learn about their life stories and the very individual motives that brought them to their faiths. This plurality of belief is after all those years of egalitarianism intriguing, but it does not come so

much as a surprise. It is - like almost everything else in China - rooted in the country's proverbial "5000 years of history". China has never been a country with only one religion. Even in periods of persecution of certain foreign religious groups or Chinese sects, China did not have a state religion. This is probably one reason why the aspect of religion in the life of the Chinese *laobaixing* ("the hundred surnames" - the common people) is often overlooked in analyses dealing with modern China. This makes "The souls of China" a very insightful, even

important work. The emphasis of the book is of course contemporary China, but the author also deals with the historical facts. The chapters of the book follow the rhythm of the Chinese lunar calendar, whose cycles still define so many events in the life of Chinese people. The Communist Party is actually emulating those cycles with its extremely ritualized congresses, five-year-plans and last but not least the highly formalized introduction process of new political leaders. And so it is with some sense of irony that the author also weaves in observations



Figure 1: Incense and offerings in Buddhist Fahai Temple, Beijing.



**Figure 2: Talisman in Daoist Dongyue Temple, close to the Central Business District in Beijing.**

and anecdotes about “big politics” right along with stories about priests, fortune tellers and funeral masters.

For Western readers it might be somewhat surprising that quite a lot of Chinese intellectuals and dissidents are professing Christians. One of them is Wang Yi, a former human rights lawyer who is now pastor of a reformed church in Chengdu, Sichuan. And while there have been no arrests of church members when Ian Johnson was doing his research for this book, it was reported in the international press that Wang was detained in May 2018 ("China Blocks a Memorial Service to Sichuan Earthquake Victims" by Chris Buckley, May 12, 2018, *The New York Times*). In the book we get a striking image of the obstructions and troubles the church has to fight with on a daily basis: from supposed infiltration with party spies to problems of finding a venue willing to a room to the church for their Christmas service. So why then does a man like Wang Yi chose to become a man of religion? Johnson tries to answer this question, his conclusion being that in a system which is politically as repressive as the Chinese one, a pastor and seminar teacher like Wang can reach far more people than any political

activist. But the book also covers the negative developments of Christian life in China: corruption of clerical staff, preachers who see themselves as the reincarnation of Christ, and sect-like communities shooting up like mushrooms, to name just a few.

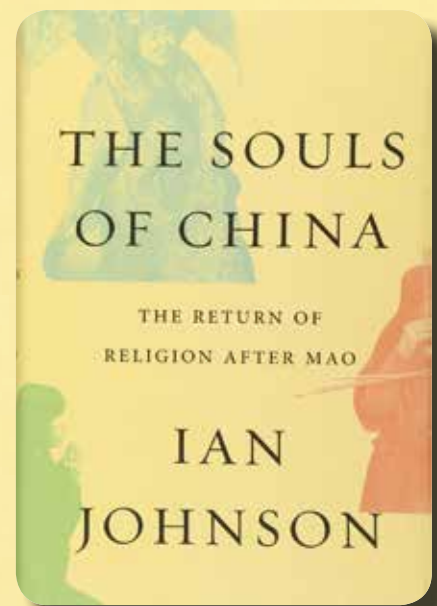
It is of course not only Christianity, but also the “native Chinese religions” - Buddhism included - which are witnessing a renaissance. And thus the cast of “The Souls of China” also includes Daoist priests, pilgrim associations and some meditation gurus. One distinctive characteristic of the three Chinese religions (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism) is that they are far less institutionalized than the Abrahamic religions - to an extent that some religious scholars have difficulties to even call them religions. Believers are not even restricted to subscribe to only one of the schools. People might pray in a Daoist temple as well as in a Buddhist pagoda and at the same time call themselves Confucianists

One of the many moving stories in “The Souls of China” is the one of Li Bin, ninth-generation Daoist funeral and feng-shui master. He tries to fix the broken chain of traditions with so many of the sacred writings and pieces of ritual music lost forever in the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, he has understood that there are no future prospects for him in the little village of his ancestors. This is why he moves to a bigger town, very much to the dismay of his father. Here he performs funerals for city dwellers estranged from tradition. Many of his clients are lacking even a basic understanding of the ancient rituals, but they clutch at straws, in the hope to do one last good thing for the deceased. In one touching scene we see two young children heartbroken in the middle of their mother’s funeral ceremony, trying to follow Li Bin’s strict instructions. The children’s father seems no less forlorn, while the funeral master is annoyed by the city people’s ignorance. This is of course another perspective on religion in modern society: Previously meaningful rituals become empty when the spiritual background knowledge is missing. And while Li Bin works hard to revive

the old traditions and actually manages to make a good living as yinyang man, it is very unsure whether there will be a tenth generation of funeral masters in the Li family. Li Binchang, the son and youngest family member, is growing up away from home in a boarding school, spending his days studying and playing video games, and dreaming of a future life in a big city.

## Conclusion

Ian Johnson has a deep understanding of what makes the Chinese people tick. He takes the readers way beyond the surface in order to give them a glimpse of the soul(s) of China. Moreover, his writing has great literary qualities; with a gripping narrative style and a rich language. The only aspect I am missing in this work is the perspective of Chinese Muslims, as there don’t seem to be many papers on Islam during the Cultural Revolution. Though this topic would of course touch some highly sensitive ethnic issues. But this aside, the “Souls of China” is indeed a must read for anyone who wants a deeper understanding of China.



## Bibliographic information

*Ian Johnson (2017) The Souls of China - The Return of Religion after Mao. Penguin Random House UK. 455 pages. ISBN: 978-0-241-30527-0*

**Britta Schmitz [brittabrittanika@gmail.com] has a Master in Modern China Studies and is fluent in Mandarin. She lived in Mainland China for nearly 10 years and has seen temples, mosques and churches in pretty much every corner of the country: From Kashgar in the "Wild West" to Harbin close to Siberia. However, she is still amazed by all the different facets of religion in China.**

# 50 Issues of Pacific Geographies

## Recollections from former managing editors

### 1992-1993: Günter Eisebith, founding editor

Back in 1992, when we launched the first issues of our publication, the content was very much informed. The "Pacific Age" was increasingly being talked about since the late 1980s. Prof. Dr. Werner Kreisel was designated Pacific researcher and affiliated to the Department of Geography of the RWTH Aachen. Together with other enthusiasts, the Working Group for Pacific Studies Aachen e.V., (APSA) was founded with the aim of making the Pacific region more widely known to the public, but also to inspire research about these parts of the world. Further activities, promoting the interest in the Pacific region, such as the internationally oriented APSA conferences and the resulting proceeding volumes, were published by means of the APSA's own publication series titled Pazifik Forum. Jobs were also created at the Department of

Geography for the start-up phase of high-impact Pacific research activities.

At the time, the APSA initially lacked a publication medium that made substantial contributions from a technical point of view, but explicitly made references to current developments and news. This was the gap the Pacific News attempted to close. Initially it was more of a short newsletter than an academic journal. True to the title motto "News - Notes - Background Information", each issue included an editorial on a topic for the discussion of current press releases, newsflashes, publication hints and travel tips. I was given a free hand in designing and designing the editions. As far as relevant support is concerned, Bernhard Küpper, who then conducted research on the Solomon Islands, helped to develop the logo and to design the specific title

page, each depending on the subject of the editorial. Of course, our approach to graphics, layout and production from today's perspective was extremely amateurish. It was done with the most modest means and was pre- e-mail and Internet. Everything had to be done by hand, including the copying and distribution of the printed copies. The prevalence of 'Pacific News' was rather small, essentially comprising only all APSA members.

The development of the publication medium from then until today is indeed considerable and I am very pleased about this. The current focus is more set on scientific contributions than on current news. This certainly corresponds to the greatly changed conditions and requirements. If you need travel tips or media reports about the Pacific region today, you will easily find them online.



### Other former managing editors:

Dr. Christel Fensterseifer (1995-1996), Helmut Westphal (1995-1996), Jürgen Jaeger (1995-1996), Heinz-Olaf Franken (1998-1999), Despina Raccota (1998-1999), Rolf Jordan (2000-2007)

## 1998-2000: Paul Blazek



The celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> issue of the Pacific Geographies fills me with joy – and pride. I remember when 20 years ago the then named „Pacific News“ publication was in a bit of a crisis - the energy of the driving team of the initial issues was absorbed by

academic challenges - and suddenly Michael Waibel and I asked ourselves how the Pacific News should continue to be filled with inspiring articles. The members of the Association for Pacific Studies (APSA) and Prof. Werner Kreisel showed us that the story needed to continue - and we collected content, played with visual elements, tried new formal elements and managed to revitalize this periodical.

It was my privilege to be an active part of this story for two years from 1998 to 2000 - for the issues number 10 till 15. And seeing now that this endeavour led to an established publication that managed not only to grow and get mature and develop into 50 issues but to fill each with interesting impulses for the ones that love Southeast Asia and the Pacific region makes me very happy.

I found a lot of inspiration in these past issues - and some of the articles opened my curiosity so much that they even influenced me to physically discover the mentioned regions and places.

The „Pacific Geographies“ are alive - and I hope that many more issues will follow in the years to come.

Right now, writing these sentences I am lying in a hammock on a sandy beach in Palau - it's close to midnight and countless stars are dotted about me in the clear night sky. These stars remind me of all the uncharted places that are looking to be discovered - while the sound of the continuous waves next to me sing a song of persistence. I wish the Pacific Geographies team the steady power to discover and share new interesting knowledge for us interested readers; to be persistent and to stay curious.

**Dr Paul Blazek [p.blazek@cyledge.com] is a passionate entrepreneur that is driven by the curiosity to research and understand how user needs change the way products and services are developed and sold online. He is founder and CEO of cyLEDGE Media, Europe's leading customization experience agency. In co-founding and scaling-up seven startups Paul learned many lessons on success and failure drivers and built up a strong network in the entrepreneurial scene. Among others, Paul is mentor of AustrianStartups, teaches at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, is affiliated researcher at the RWTH Aachen University and a research fellow of the Peter Pribilla Foundation. Paul studied at the RWTH Aachen University and the University of Vienna and achieved his Ph.D. at the University of Göttingen.**

## 2008-2016: Julia N. Albrecht



Dear readers – it gives me great pleasure to see Pacific Geographies publishing issue #50. When I came on board as a co-editor in 2008, the (back then) Pacific News was still very

much based on both contributions and readership from members of the Association for Pacific Studies, and relatively little known. How things have changed! With initially mostly Germany-based authors, the transition to publishing in English language with issue 33 in 2010 has not been without its challenges, and many hours have been spent on editing and fine-tuning papers.

As the quality of the contributions increased we felt that the name Pacific News had outlived its suitability, and the current name of Pacific Geographies was adopted with issue 39 in 2013. The coinciding introduction and establishment of a peer-review process has set Pacific Geographies on a path which will hopefully lead to further international visibility and

acknowledgement of the journal. Equally noteworthy, of course, are the strengths that have carried Pacific Geographies since its early days. I specifically refer to the use of high quality colour photography as well as the potential to cover current issues and events, a positive effect of an often relatively short period between article submission and publication.

Congratulations on this momentous occasion to the current team of editors, especially to Michael Waibel without whose enthusiasm and dedication Pacific Geographies would not be what it is today. I am delighted and grateful to have been co-editor at a time when so many significant changes have occurred that have put the Pacific Geographies on a promising path for the future!

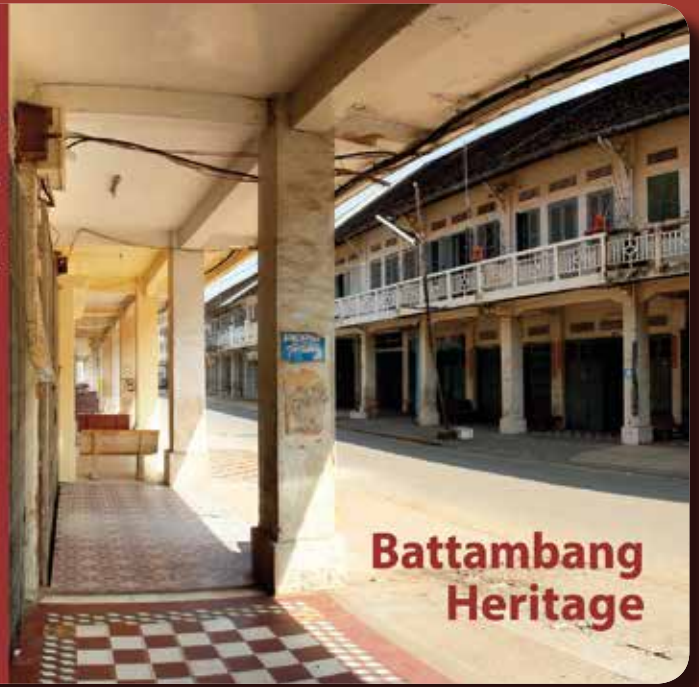
**Dr Julia N. Albrecht [julia.albrecht@otago.ac.nz] is a Senior Lecturer and the PhD Director in the Department of Tourism, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Julia's work is published in leading journals such as the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, the International Journal of Tourism Research, and Annals of Tourism Research, among others. Since ending her term as a co-editor of Pacific Geographies in 2016 she has joined the Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism as a co-editor, and she continues to sit on the editorial boards of Pacific Geographies and the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research.**

Koditek, Walter (2018) Battambang: Heritage. 146 pages. ISBN 978-98878796-0-2 (retail price: 25 US\$).



Battambang Heritage

Walter Koditek



### INTRODUCTION

When most people think about Cambodian heritage, what most probably comes to mind are the ancient monuments of Angkor, the glorious achievements of the Khmer civilization, built for their god-kings between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century and listed as UNESCO World Heritage since 1992. However, in the shadow of Angkor there exists a much younger and basically unknown cultural heritage in Cambodia. The country has inherited a rich and diverse architecture dating from the last 150 years of the country's ever changing urban past.

Despite continuous transformation and widespread loss of this comparatively 'recent' built heritage, there are some smaller cities and towns across the country where the architectural heritage is still in a rather good condition and worthy of preservation. Among them is Battambang, a provincial capital of about 150,000 inhabitants in the northwest of Cambodia.

The photographs in this book were taken in over more than a decade between 2007 and 2018. The city has changed a lot during that period. Economic development and modernisation of the country triggered rapid urban growth and a sometimes seemingly unregulated building boom.

When I arrived in Battambang in 2007 I immediately fell in love with the laid back atmosphere of the city and its 'old world charm'. Over the years I saw many positive developments, but was also witness to the gradual decline of the architectural heritage of the city. This acted as a spur for me to write and publish this book.

The book is neither meant to be a complete inventory of the architectural heritage of the city, nor is it a detailed guidebook for the discerning visitor. It does not aim to be historically or architecturally comprehensive but rather offers a personal view of the unique 'sense of place' of the city, as well as some useful background information.

In selecting the photographs, I have tried to capture the qualities of the city's historic urban landscape with its streetscapes and buildings and their hidden details and colours. Battambang offers a wealth of Cambodian cultural heritage both tangible and intangible. The book focuses on the architecture, with short excursions into the traditional cultural landscape, the performing arts, and the religious and the culinary heritage of the country.

Walter Koditek  
Hong Kong, March 2018

