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

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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

after a special issue in collaboration with the Austrian South Pacific Society (OSPG), we are pleased to announce the 56th volume of Pacific Geographies issued together with the German Pacific Network.

The three scientific papers deal with current issues in the Pacific Island countries and Australia: Ghostnet Art and Environmental Activism; Fijian immigration in Japan; the withdrawal of the Micronesian states from the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).

The first contribution by Stephanie Walda-Mandel (Übersee-Museum Bremen) analyzes the ghostnet art movement, the impressive artistic design and the environmental activism of Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Wandel-Mandel presents the art movement through a special exhibition at Übersee-Museum (Overseas Museum) Bremen (Germany).

The second paper explores Pacific Islander trans-border mobility within the Pacific region. The contribution by Dominik Schieder (University of Siegen) discusses the reasons and aims, which characterizes Fijian immigration in Japan.

The third article by Oliver Hasenkamp (Pacific Network) analyzes the withdrawal of the five Micronesian states from the most important regional organization in the Pacific Islands region, the Pacific Islands Forum. Hasenkamp investigates the complex reasons resulting in the withdrawal and discusses potential impacts, on the regional and also the international scale.

In addition to the three articles, Hermann Mückler (University of Vienna) critically reviews the book "Das Prachtbook" recently published by the German historian Götz Aly. The book that deals with the capture of an outrigger boat on Luv island (Papua New Guinea) in 1902 got great media attention. While the popular press praised the book, scientific colleagues are mostly critical.

Please enjoy the articles and the book review and do not hesitate to give us feedback. Besides, all contributions are open access and can be downloaded on our homepage. Authors retain copyright, and opinions and views expressed in the contributions are those of the authors.

The editors of this special issue, Oliver Hasenkamp & 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, 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 team. All other articles have been reviewed by the editorial team.

The Association for Pacific Studies (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Pazifische Studien e.V., APSA) was founded at the Department of Geography of the University of Technology in Aachen in 1987. 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 (now PACIFIC GEOGRAPHIES). APSA-Members receive this journal 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

'Rupert' by the artist Ellarose Savage
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"Defend the Oceans!" Ghostnet Art and Environmental Activism of Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

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Abstract: Ghostnet art is an art movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that has been gaining enthusiastic followers worldwide in recent years, not only because of its impressive artistic design, but equally because of the artists' message behind the artworks. The ghostnet sculptures, made mainly by members of two Australian Indigenous communities in Erub and Pormpuraaw are constructed from old fishing nets. For the artists, it is both an expression of their environmental activism to protect the oceans and their close connection with their natural environment. Their close relationship to the land and sea is reflected in the artworks, which also create a connection to their history, cultural heritage, identity, and their totems. Their works are based on their myths, their land and their culture. In 2018, the Übersee-Museum Bremen (eng. Overseas Museum Bremen) presented these impressive artworks for the first time in Germany in a small special exhibition, the realization and background of which will be discussed in this article.

Keywords: Ghostnets, environmental activism, marine debris, Erub Island, Pormpuraaw, Torres Strait Islanders, Australian Aborigines

[Submitted as Scientific Paper: 02 July 2021, acceptance of the revised manuscript: 13 August 2021]

Figure 1: Artists of Erub Arts: Lavinia Ketchell, Rachel Emma Gela, Ellarose Savage, Florence Gutchen, Nancy Naawi, Nancy Kiwat, Alma Sailor, Ethel Charlie, Racy Oui-Pitt.

Introduction

Ghostnets drifting in our oceans and washing up on our beaches are now a well-known phenomenon worldwide. From August 24 to November 25, 2018, the Übersee-Museum Bremen (eng. Overseas Museum Bremen) showed a small special exhibition entitled: 'Australian Ghostnets - Art from the Sea' (German title: 'Australische Ghostnets: Kunst aus dem Meer') in which 16 works by ten different contemporary Indigenous artists from the Australian state of Queensland on this topic were on display for the first time in Germany. With their sculptures, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists want to draw attention to the immense threat posed to the oceans by ghostnets and thus lead a worldwide movement to protect the oceans and their inhabitants. In doing so, their environmental activism transforms the silent threat into stunning, colorful artworks that call us to action and protect endangered marine life: "Ghost net is a real menace to marine life. When you see the reef, you want to protect it. You want to pick up things and do something and make something out of it, anything and also something for yourself too" (Racy Oui-Pitt in MU Sea UM 2021). For these 'advocates of the sea', however, this is not only about environmental protection, but also about their cultural heritage and identity.

In this article the threat of ghostnets drifting in the oceans as well as the artistic treatment of two communities on the Australian north coast with the nets washed up there will be explained. The starting point of the article is the first exhibition of ghostnet sculptures opened in Germany and its realization.

The first chapter describes the ghostnets and their origin as well as the danger they pose in order to create a basis for readers to understand the art from and the underlying message explained later. Following this, the implementation of the exhibition, the artists' communities, and the creative process are presented. Finally, the role of the artists as activists, which is central to their creative engagement with ghostnets, as well as their involvement with local art centers, are carried out. To understand the deep meaning of the sculptures the indigenous cultural concepts upon which ghostnet art is based are discussed.

In doing so, the literature used in this article is mainly drawn from the fields of anthropology, art history and marine biology. When possible, original quotes from the artists are included to make their perspective understandable. But also websites of other museums dealing with ghostnet art as well as those of indigenous initiatives and local art centers. Only by including these different scientific perspectives can a holistic, multi-perspective picture of ghostnets and their background be achieved.

Ghostnets: definition and problem areas

In order to understand the artistic approach of the ghostnet artists in light of their commitment to their environment, it is useful to first address the cause of the threat posed by ghostnets. What are ghostnets and why are they called that?

Ghostnets floating in the ocean represent a global problem that unfolds almost invisibly below the ocean surface, but very visibly in some coastal areas, especially on beaches. The term 'ghostnets' refers to discarded fishing nets drifting in the sea, floating silently through the sea like ghosts, almost invisible to marine animals, and thus become a deadly but unowned trap for the latter. Sea turtles, sharks, dolphins, whales, manatees, seabirds and other animals get entangled in the nets and perish in agony, cut off body parts and starve to death or suffocate in this hopeless situation.

The nets enter the oceans in very different ways. On the one hand, fishermen often throw their old and no longer needed nets overboard, since their disposal means a great (financial) effort. In addition, there are numerous fishermen who fish in zones where they are not permitted to do so. If they are discovered during their illegal activity, they immediately let their nets slip into the sea in order to cover their tracks and provide no

© Erub Arts / Courtesy Arts d'Australie • Stéphane Jacob, Paris. Photo: Lynnette Griffiths.

Figure 2: Florence Gutchen and 'Mabel'.

evidence of their offense, thus avoiding prosecution. Moreover, it often happens that the nets, due to their increasing weight and size, break free from the vessels and are thus inadvertently lost with their contents. Since the recovery of nets is very costly, the loss of such nets is usually not reported (WWF 2020a). At least a third of the plastic waste in our oceans is made up of old fishing gear such as nets and ropes. According to a WWF report, about one million tons are added each year (WWF 2020b). In the past, the nets were made of biodegradable hemp. Since the 1960s they have been using nylon, which is non-biodegradable, but grounds into small plastic particles (Habekuss 2018). The decomposition of these gears takes enormous time. Depending on the type of net, it can take 400 to 600 years for a plastic net to decompose (Shea 2014). By

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Figure 3: Ghostnet hotspots at the Gulf of Carpenteria.

Figure 4: 'Archer Fish' by Sid Bruce Short Joe, 2016.

then, toxic plasticizers are released and the microparticles (microplastics) enter the ocean and our food web.

The nets found on beaches each have a different texture, the mesh size of the net, the length of the niche, how the knots are made (Le Roux 2016b). Thus, they can be easily assigned to different nations. Studies have shown that they originate mainly from China, Thailand, South Korea and Vietnam (Le Roux 2016b). Wilcox et al. (2013) estimate that 55% of the nets (gillnet, trawl and longline gear) in the Gulf of Carpenteria can be attributed to these nations and cite additional fisheries in Taiwan, Indonesia, Australia and Japan. Only 10% of the nets come from Australian fisheries (Global Ghost Gear Initiative 2018). However, it remains mostly unclear where exactly in the ocean the nets were lost. This would be due to the large number of illegal fishing activities in the Gulf of Carpenteria. Detecting the perpetrators of these activities and holding them accountable is therefore usually very difficult.

For marine animals, these nets are often visually imperceptible and so these death traps catch everything in their path. Researchers have found that sea turtles represent more than 80% of the victims of these death traps in the case of Australia (Wilcox et al. 2012). This is due to the ocean currents prevailing in the Gulf of Carpenteria, which bring the animals straight to the nets. The resident sea turtles move with the current and are particularly vulnerable to the nets. Studies have shown that up to four sea turtles can get caught in every 100 meters of fine mesh nets (Wilcox et al. 2014). Some of these nets are up to 50 kilometers long, and there are tens of thousands of kilometers of nets floating around the world. If laid end to end, this would be more than enough to span the equator (Whale and Dolphin Conservation 2012). These kilometer-long nets with their deadly prey weigh an immense amount, very often a few tons (Global Ghost Gear Initiative 2018). Only when some of these nets with their senseless victims in them have finally become too heavy they slowly sink to the bottom of the sea. And there, too, the heavily laden nets destroy or kill the fragile corals and animals living on the seabed. Others, however, wash up on the beaches.

The exhibition and the ghostnet objects on display

The organization of the exhibition

The exhibition 'Australian Ghostnets: Art from the Sea' was created in collaboration with the Paris gallery Arts d'Australie by Stéphane Jacob-Langevin, who since 1996 has been involved in the dissemination and promotion of paintings, sculptures and other art objects by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists. Stéphane Jacob-Langevin has been working with the ghostnet artists for a long time and is a well-respected expert in this field. Together with him I selected the sculptures, which were shown for the first time in Germany in the cabinet room of the Bremen Übersee-Museum, as well as receiving background information on the artists and their works from Arts D'Australie. Some of the sculptures had already been shown in other international exhibitions, but not in this compilation and setting.

In addition to the curator and her intern, staff from the Übersee-Museum's Restoration, Magazine Management, Workshops, Collection Technology, Graphics, PR and Marketing, Exhibition Coordination, and the Education departments were involved in the implementation of the small exhibition.

The exhibition was made possible partly through the funding from the Ostasiatischer Verein Bremen (eng. East Asian Association Bremen).

The ghostnet sculptures

The artists' works shown in the exhibition come from two different communities in the Australian state of Queensland: Pormpuraaw (west coast of the Cape

© Übersee-Museum Bremen. Photo: Volker Beinhorn.

Figure 5: 'Sea Turtle' by Elliot Koonutta, 2016.

York peninsula) and Erub (Darnley) Island (Torres Strait Islands) (see Fig.1). Already in the run-up to the work on the exhibition, representatives of the two communities had made it clear that they did not want their sculptures to be spatially mixed, since they also have different artistic approaches and different cultural backgrounds: "We have different experiences and different stories. They have theirs and we have ours. It's good to have a mix of cultures as long as we recognize and acknowledge differences. We are Torres Strait Islanders and they are Aboriginal. We are different" (Ellarose Savage in Le Roux 2016a: 48). Australia uses two distinct terms for Indigenous people: Those on the mainland are called Aboriginal and those living in the Torres Strait are Torres Strait Islanders (Le Roux 2016b).

To address this desire in the installations, the artworks from the two communities were each presented together as a group when realizing the spatial design, so that visitors could see where each sculpture came from not only through the text panels, but also through their installation in the space. For this reason, the ghostnet sculptures of the Erub community were presented as a cohesive school of fish, while the works of the Pormpuraaw artists were also hung or mounted in spatial proximity to each other.

A total of 16 ghostnet sculptures by ten different artists were shown in the exhibition, all of which made a strong impression in their three-dimensionality and texture. Presented from the Prompuraaw community were a 1.50 m "Sea Horse" by Kim Norman, a 2.40 m "Hammer Head Shark", a 1.43 m "Sea Turtle" by Elliot Koonutta, an "Archer Fish" by Sid Bruce Short Joe and a "Stonefish" by Christine Yantumba. From the Erub community, the fish "Rupert" and "Sainty" by Ellarose Savage, "Cindy" by Racy Oui-Pitt, "Spyda" and "Bala" by Emma Gela, "Mabel" as well as "Cezanne" by Florence Gutchen, "Joseph" by Sarah-Dawn Gela, "Tagena" by Ethel Charlie were brought together to form a fish school installation. Complementing the Erub community's contribution was "Turtle" by Lavinia Ketchel and "Squid" by Emma Gela.

Photos and films

In addition to installations of the ghostnet sculptures, the exhibition also featured photographs of the artists making their works, taken by Lynnette Griffiths and Paul Jakubowski during several ghostnet workshops in Erub and Pormpuraaw. Emphasis was placed on presenting photographs depicting artists whose works were also on display in the Bremen exhibition, so that visitors could make a direct connection between ghostnet sculpture and artist. In order to learn how the nets reach the coasts and to let the artists themselves have their say, several short films from the Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of South Australia were also shown at a film station in the exhibition, in which the artists explain in more detail their motivation for creating ghostnet art and the background to their artworks. For example, you can see Elliot Koonutta, Sid Bruce Short Joe and Simon Norman making ghostnet sculptures at the Pormpuraaw Art and Culture Center that were inspired by the myths of their ancestors. Erub artists also explain the deep meaning the ocean has for them and how they integrate this close relationship into their sculptures. Florence Gutchen, artist from Erub, describes this special meaning with impressive words: "It all comes back to the sea. We are all connected by the world's oceans. Making art is really making meaning: my art helps me understand and make sense of the world" (Florence Gutchen in MU SEA UM 2021).

Innovations of the exhibition

What was innovative about this exhibition in Germany was the impressive combination of the cultural heritage of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, their advocacy for their environment and the fascinating artistic expression. With this approach, ghostnet art was a perfect

Figure 6: 'Stonefish' by Christine Yantumba, 2016.

fit for the Übersee-Museum, which is a three-division museum consisting of the departments of ethnology, natural history, and commerce history. In its exhibitions and projects, the museum often focuses on showing visitors the beauty and diversity of the world (be it biological or cultural), in order to encourage people to preserve and protect this beauty and diversity - an approach that ties in very well with the idea of the ghostnet artists, whose concern is to transform something fundamentally negative into something positive.

The sculptures encouraged exhibition visitors to engage in a dialogue about a frightening worldwide phenomenon, and they were mesmerized by the colorfulness and artistic execution of the works. At the same time, the artists' works created a colorful underwater world that delighted adults and children, and completely retold a traditional topic with modern materials that the artists recycle. The exhibition thus also valued the world's oldest living culture and demonstrated again the extraordinary ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to adapt to new circumstances while living their traditions.

The exhibition was already well received by visitors and the media on the day of its opening and was supported by an accompanying program in the form of, for example, curatorial tours, a theater play and an upcycling workshop for children. This was due on the one hand to the current topic of marine litter and ghostnets, which are causing great damage not only in Australia but also in Europe, but equally to the impressive impact of the individual works, which most visitors were able to admire for the first time. According to their own statements, the exhibition visitors knew little about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, history, identity and culture and were impressed by the ghostnet artists' positive approach to a global problem. For some visitors to the exhibition, the dramatic threat posed by ghostnets and the brutal death of sea creatures on the one hand, and the often cheerful, colorful sculptures on the other, seemed incompatible. But it is precisely this combination of danger and beauty that can create awareness.

The work of the artists & their involvement in the communities of Pormpuraaw and Erub

As part of the cultural revitalization efforts of Indigenous people in recent years, the traditional arts in Australia have also experienced a revival (continuing through bark paintings, modern acrylic paintings and sculptures with deep symbolic content) (UNESCO 2018). This also applies to the people from Erub and Pormpuraaw.

The communities of Pormpuraaw and Erub

Pormpuraaw means 'entrance way to a house' in Kuuk Thaayorre language (Pormpuraaw Arts and Cultural Centre 2021) and is an Aboriginal community consisting of more than 500 people living on the west coast of the Cape York Peninsula. It is located about 650 kilometers northwest of Cairns, which takes 8-10 hours by car. During the monsoon season from January to May, it is often surrounded by water for several months, making it even more remote. During this wet season, access roads are often closed, so that Pormpuraaw can then only be reached by aircraft (Art collector n.d.). This remoteness ensured that the community members were able to largely preserve important parts of their cultural heritage. Even today it is very important to them to preserve their traditions and their land. Many myths of their ancestors tell of sea creatures that created the entire world, and respectful treatment of nature is part of their everyday life in Pormpuraaw (Pormpuraaw Land & Sea Management 2010). However, as almost everywhere in the Pacific, the arrival of European colonizers in the 19th century has had consequences that extend to the present, and living conditions in Pormpuraaw are economically difficult. In these remote areas, there are

usually few opportunities for residents to earn a regular income (Global Ghost Gear Initiative 2018), so artistic expression of their care for the environment is also a way to connect with the rest of the world and create a livelihood: 'Our art is a bridge between our culture and community to the outside world' (Pormpuraaw Arts and Cultural Centre 2018). Their art is one of the few commodities they can export and therefore plays a significant role in Pormpuraaw, not only socially but also economically. This benefits not only the artists, but the entire community (Arts Queensland 2018). In doing so, the people in Pormpuraaw, as well as those in Erub, work closely with the local Art and Culture Centre. The Pompuraaw Art and Culture Center is a non-profit organization run by local community artists and people involved in cultural work and events (Pormpuraaw Arts and Cultural Centre 2021).

The other community from which the sculptures in the exhibition at Bremen's Übersee-Museum come is from Darnley Island, also known as Erub in the local language called Meriam. Surrounded by a fringing reef, Erub is part of the Torres Strait Islands in the Australian state of Queensland and is located 60 kilometers south of Papua New Guinea. The approximately 400 inhabitants are predominantly of Melanesian origin and call themselves 'Erubam Le People' ('People of Erub'). They can be assigned to four different tribes (Erub Arts 2018). Their cultural tradition is based on a long history of seafaring with elaborately carved canoes, weapons, worked stone objects and detailed dance costumes (Erub Arts 2018). Creation myths and events of the past are passed down to succeeding generations through dances and songs (Erub Arts 2018). Their access to education is limited due to their remote location. For example, there is no high school in Erub and electricity is generated by diesel generators. Just like in Pormpuraaw, there are few job prospects on their remote island, so their creative art-making is one of the few ways they can earn an income. However, the current Covid-19 pandemic hit both communities hard, making it very difficult for them to spread their art since spring 2020, with numerous exhibitions and workshops cancelled and museums closed.

The ghostnet artists involved may live in remote regions of our planet, but they now enjoy the attention of art lovers worldwide and have won numerous awards. For example, various ghostnet sculptures from these two communities have been exhibited in New York, San Francisco, Singapore, Paris, Cluny, Monaco and Geneva. The world's largest permanent ghostnet installation has been on display at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney since 2018. Ghostnet art is now also shown at international art fairs and festivals, and the works reach visitor numbers in the hundreds of thousands (Arts Queensland 2018). Not only do the artists share their art and message, but they also expand their skills and hands-on experience in the selection, cataloging, transportation, marketing and selling of artwork at a major event. In this way, they gain experience of the often complexities of the art market and how widespread in this world their art is recognized, for example, Europe (Arts Queensland 2018). In doing so, they share their cultural background and stories with an interested international audience while keeping their traditions alive (Arts Queensland 2018).

The collection of nets

How do the artists work and how does a dirty old fishing net become a ghostnet artwork? Every morning, local rangers collect the nets washed up overnight on their coasts and document them: "Recycling those little wires, recycling the ghost net, instead of just throwing it out.... we like to recycle. Everything that they throw at the tip we used to go and collect. The rangers are doing fine bringing in more ghost nets. Especially after monsoon, it's all over the beach. So we recycle it" (Sid Bruce Short Joe in Australian Museum 2014). From these nets the artists pick the ones they would like to use. In the past, the retrieved nets were all burnt or transported to local council landfill sites for disposal (Butler et al. 2013). The Indigenous rangers are funded through the Australian federal government's Working on Country program: "It combines Indigenous traditional knowledge with modern techniques to protect and care for the land and the sea" (Country needs people 2021).

The artists now produce colorful artworks from the resulting mountains of nets of various colors and sizes. They deliberately avoid some nets because of their experience that they are too fragile (Le Roux 2016a). In Erub, artists also often receive nets directly from the art centre where they work, or relatives collect nets for them on the coast. Sometimes they also go searching on the coast themselves. In this way, ghostnets become part of a traditional system of collection and exchange: in the past, people collected trees washed up from Papua New Guinea, the wood from which was used to build houses; today, they are collecting nets (Le Roux 2016b).

Ghostnet making

When it comes to processing the nets, a sketch is often made by the artist first. Then, based on this, first the carcass of the respective marine animal is bent and welded. In the next step, the nets are then artfully woven around this framework and sewn and decorated. In this way, the artists give metal and nets the shape of different creatures.

Figure 7: Sid Bruce Short Joe working on 'Batfish'.

In Pormpuraaw, weaving has always been one of the predominant craft techniques and was performed by both men and women. For example, Pormpuraaw artists often weave synthetic fibers in the same way they process palm or pandanus leaves (Le Roux 2016a). Some Pormpuraaw artists additionally use (acrylic) paint to give their works the right expression. Sometimes they paint or spray the sculptures or dip them, so that a completely different visual impression is created compared to the works from Erub where the artists don't generally use paint (Le Roux 2016a). All of the works are characterized by great vividness and, in general, the individual artists have their own preferences as to which nets are particularly suited to the artistic expression they desire for their particular sculpture. During their creative period, the artists also adopted different techniques of art installation as well as sculpture, adding to the typical ghostnet iconography (Le Roux 2016a). In this way, these artworks also gained more and more realistic expression through refinement of working techniques (Le Roux 2016a).

Artist Lavinia Ketchell describes the mood during the joint artistic creation process as generally exuberant and cheerful: "I enjoy making all kinds of different things from ghost nets. The colors, visible once you unravel the net, make my works bright and happy" (Lavinia Ketchell in MU SEA UM 2021). The artworks are often given nicknames by their creators, and there is much shared laughter (Le Roux 2016b). Here, once again, the basic resilient, optimistic, and forward-looking attitude of the ghostnet artists, who believe in the power of their works in the fight against the destruction of the ocean, is evident.

Other activities of the artists

Many of the artists are engaged not only in ghostnet art, but also in woodcarving, painting and printmaking. Works in ceramics, screen printing, lino cuts and drawings on paper are held in International and National collections (Erub Arts 2018). To deal artistically with their environment and their origin is of great importance for the artists. In doing so, they build a bridge from the past to the present. This is how Erub artist Nancy Naawi explains it: "I have always been interested in making things. I have always crocheted and enjoyed sewing and handcrafts. As a member of Erub arts, I have gained confidence as an artist, and I want to do things that represent me, my family, and my surroundings from 'before-time' to modern times" (Nancy Naawi in MU SEA UM 2021). Even though Torres Strait Islanders naturally participate in modern life with all its technological possibilities, their island custom still plays an important role for them (Hamby and Kirk 2016). Working on their art strengthens their cultural identity and background: "My artwork gives me the opportunity to express the things that are important to me, my identity, and my culture" (Jimmy John Thaiday in MU SEA UM 2021).

Environmental activism and message of the ghostnet artists

Ghostnet art and marine conservation

In conceiving their works, the artists draw inspiration from the environment around them and, in the case of the ghostnet works, also from diving for a view of the underwater sea life. During the 1860s, the Torres Strait Islands were known for pearling and the gathering of bêche-de-mer (Hamby and Kirk 2016). Many female divers were so talented that they were even kidnapped and forced to dive for others outside their community (Florek 2005). In their current pursuit of their ghostnet art, the people of Erub continue to be inspired by common dives and the coral reef to create new artwork ideas that they incorporate into their work.

The unmistakable message of the ghostnet artists of both communities is universal and concerns the people in the Pacific as well as those in the rest of the world: "Defend the Oceans". The background to this message is that over 30 years ago, in 1989, the first ghostnet was found on the north coast of Australia (Global Ghost Gear Initiative 2018). Since then, the amount of nets washed up on the beaches there has increased dramatically. Due to monsoon winds and the resulting ocean currents, the Gulf of Carpenteria between Arnhem Land and Cape York has become a hotspot for ghostnets. The Gulf of Carpenteria is a bay that cuts into the coast of northern Australia and is bounded on the east by the Torres Strait. 90% of ghostnets found in Australia are washed ashore in the northern half of the Gulf of Carpenteria (Le Roux 2016b), making this region the most affected by ghostnets within Australia. Unfortunately, this area provides an ideal habitat for numerous endangered species, such as six of the seven species of sea turtles, dugongs and sawfish (Global Ghost Gear Initiative 2018).

As early as the mid-1990s, locals along the Australian coast noticed the revered emergence of ghostnets (Le Roux 2016b). In 2004, the Australian government launched GhostNets Australia (GNA) to address debris from commercial fishing (Hamby and Kirk 2016). GhostNets Australia now works with rangers from 40 linguistic groups in Australia and had removed 13,000 nets by 2016 (Le Roux 2016b). The successes can be attributed to the good cooperation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups (Le Roux 2016b) of rangers, fishers, artists and environmental activists, who work hand in hand for their common goal: remove ghostnets from beaches, rescue animals caught in them, further research the phenomenon of ghostnets, and track the paths of animals affected by them. In the future course of the joint work, the aim was to promote and disseminate ghostnet art. In this approach, an ecological perspective is impressively combined with the artistic one. Between 2009 and 2011 the processing of fishing nets into artistically designed jewelry and baskets took off in Australian communities. The artists eventually sought greater challenges and ventured into increasingly complex, larger sculptures. In this way, the artists become advocates for the ocean ecosystem, reminding us of the importance of nature with their colorful art - and with very simple means: needles, soldering irons, knives, scissors, wire cutters and net cutters, and of course the discarded fishing nets as a basis.

Ghostnet art and cultural traditions

But the aspect of marine conservation is only one facet of their work: Their works also vividly demonstrate their unique approach to their cultural traditions. Ghostnet sculptures often also represent the artists' personal totem animals, with which they share a mythical kinship relationship that goes back to their ancestors (Le Roux 2016b). The concept of the totem stems from a belief that humans have a mythical kinship connection to certain animals, plants, mountains, etc. (National Trust

of Australia 2012). Ghostnet artworks are furthermore an important element of their identity and culture, as also vividly described by Le Roux (2016b: 14): "(...) ghostnet art is both inscribed in a contemporary and worldwide issue and portrays the strength of Indigenous values, depicting the core elements of family, land and sea, history, identity and culture". This close relationship further explains the special significance of the artifacts for the artists: "The artistic appropriation of discarded nets reveals the intimate connections that Indigenous people have built with their environment and the economic, cultural and diplomatic strategies they have developed to protect it" (Le Roux 2016b: 2).

The connection with the sea and their land represents one of the cornerstones of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity, well-being, and spirituality (Australian Together 2021; Indigenous Working Group Workshop 2002). This relationship is often a very deep one and is characterized by reciprocity and caring: the country, in this case the sea, feeds the people and in return they care for their country. The artists described here accomplish this through the path of their creativity: "Even if not many ghostnet works represent the animals trapped by discarded nets, they express a strong connection to the sea environment" (Le Roux 2016b: 10). Sea turtles, for example, are an important part of Erub Islanders' belief system and at the same time a traditional source of food (Mayer 2021).

Ever since the first ghostnets landed with them, the people of the Pormpuraaw and Erub community have creatively transformed them into everyday objects, for example by making baskets, bags, or curtains decorated with shells. Then, in 2009, the first ghostnet workshop was held in Aurukun on the Cape York Peninsula, where local artists came together and made larger objects with dedicated staff from the GhostNets Australia organization (led by Australian artist Sue Ryan). They used weaving and other craft techniques that have always existed in the communities, now brought together with new techniques. To the delight of the elders, traditional knowledge of craft techniques are being passed on to the younger generation. These traditional ways of working merge with newer techniques and materials at ghostnet art. That same year the 'Ghost Net Art Project' was launched.

Figure 8: Michael Norman and his work 'Dugong'.

Various workshops on the Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait Island soon produced artworks that quickly attracted the interest of collectors, museums and galleries.

Artists and art centers engaged in the ghostnet art movement

In Erub, the engagement with ghostnet art emanates from the Art Centre "Erub Arts" or "Erub Erwer Meta". It is the first Art Centre run by Torres Strait artists and was established in 2005 (Hamby and Kirk 2016). The Erub Arts vision statement clearly states that: "We want our community to have a strong Erubian identity. Our Art Centre works to revitalise our traditional culture and promote it to the world" (Hamby and Kirk 2016: 166; Erub Arts 2018).

Every day, the artists at Erub Arts meet to work together on the sculptures, which leads to a strong sense of community (Hamby and Kirk 2016). They are supported and inspired in their artistic work by artistic director Lynnette Griffiths, who has worked with the artists for many years, undertaking workshops, public events, and research trips. This also involves spreading the word about ghostnet art in Australia and beyond, and launching similar projects in other parts of Australia.

Another important person in the fight against ghostnets is visual artist and former Cape York Indigenous art center coordinator Sue Ryan, who also works closely with GNA (Le Roux 2016b). Together they are trying to make people involved: at exhibitions of ghostnet art, for example at the Cairns Indigenous Art fair the visitors are given the opportunity to collaborate on a large sculpture within a workshop or to make their own small ghostnet artwork for themselves. In this way, the visitor goes from being a "visitor" to a "spect'actor", perhaps contributing to ocean conservation in the future (Le Roux 2016b: 5), as a connection is made between people, the ocean, and the artwork.

For the artists, artistic expression is an intrinsic part of their cultural practice and the transmission of traditional knowledge from generation to generation: "I am interested in expressing my relationship with the sea, and am currently exploring the links between people's surroundings, objects, and heritage culture. Sea creatures are an important part of my heritage" (Ellarose Savage in MU SEA UM 2021). Other artists place special emphasis on their cultural heritage and its preservation in the form of their artistic expression: "I started making art seriously in 2002, and was a founding member of Erub Arts. I want to continue to make art that relates to my heritage and promotes our unique island way" (Racy Oui-Pitt in MU SEA UM 2021).

This process is now continued by contemporary artists using modern recycled materials. And with their works they want to encourage a dialogue with the rest of the world. They want to bring together people who care about the oceans. In this context the term networking takes on a whole new meaning. Therefore, it is all the more important to the artists to preserve them together.

Conclusion

The work of the various ghostnet artists originated in workshops they held in their communities, which have since spread widely throughout Australia. In the beginning, the artists dealt with smaller objects, and later these first steps developed into ghostnet art, which is now sought after on the art market. But there are also numerous artists in Australia who, inspired by the ghostnet movement, individually produce ghostnet art outside of workshops (Le Roux 2016a). In doing so, they aim to create awareness of the oceans while relating to their cultural heritage: "These objects demonstrate a very rich tangible and intangible heritage and provide a way in to the history and culture of Indigenous societies of Northern Australia: memories related to fishing; stories associated with totemic animals; or events related to colonial and post-colonial history, such as the construction of a church or working conditions in the pearl industry" (Le Roux 2016a: 22).

It is important to the ghostnet artists not to be perceived as helpless victims of the devastating situation, but to be seen as active agents in the protection of their seas. The special aesthetics and touching beauty of the works can make the viewer forget that they were originally created from deadly traps and discarded fishing gear. Their sheer vibrancy makes us look closer and realize what we will lose if we don't take care of our oceans. The artists give exhibition visitors the opportunity to see their art as a chance to rethink of our treatment of nature and its inhabitants, and the responsibility we have for our environment.

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Fiji Islander trans-border mobility in the Pacific: The case of Fiji and Japan

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Abstract: This article is concerned with Fiji Islanders in Japan. Its objective is to introduce a to date little explored case of Pacific Islander trans-border mobility within the Pacific region. After providing a general overview of the topic, it discusses two of the main reasons why Fiji Islanders spend shorter durations or migrate for (in)definite periods to Japan in more detail: education and professional sport. Although the paper focuses on Fiji and Japan, the discussion points at two structural undercurrents that characterize Pacific Islander mobility more generally and aims to appeal to a broader audience interested in Pacific Studies.

Keywords: Fiji, Japan, Pacific Rim, mobility, migration

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Source: Dominik Schieder.

Figure 1: Reception for the Kanagawa-based honorary consul of the Republic of Fiji to Japan in Yokohama, 2012.

Source: Dominik Schieder.

Figure 2: Japan-based Fiji Islanders gather for the 2012 Tokyo Sevens international rugby tournament.

Introduction

Trans-border mobility is constitutive to the lives of many contemporary Pacific Islanders (e.g. Keck & Schieder 2015; Lee & Francis 2009; Rensel & Howard 2012; Taylor & Lee 2017) and Fiji is no exception. Once a British crown colony between 1874 and 1970, Fiji has witnessed the influx of large numbers of South Asian indentured labourers and passenger migrants during its early colonial history as well as other immigrants mainly from East Asia and Oceania. Since the 1970s, however, Fiji has turned from an immigration to an emigration country (Lal 2003). Large numbers of Indo-Fijians (the descendants of South Asian immigrants) and other Fiji Islanders have left Fiji following the ethnonationalist political developments which unfolded after Fiji gained independence and led to several political coups and constitutional crises since the mid-1980s (Lal 2006; Fraenkel et al. 2009). At the same time, Fiji Islanders have been involved in different types of educational and labour mobility, occasionally leading to permanent emigration (IOM 2020; Mohanty 2006).

While Fiji Islander mobility is global in its reach, as the presence of migrants from Fiji in countries as diverse as France, India, Japan, the United States of America and the United Kingdom testifies, a recent study conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shows that by mid-2019, the absolute majority of the estimated total of 222.000 Fiji-born people living abroad were located in four Pacific Rim countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US (IOM 2020:xvi; cf. Voigt-Graf 2007). The same study claims that emigration from Fiji has doubled since 1990 and that in 2019 Fiji had one of the highest mobility rates of Pacific Island countries with an estimated emigrant population of 25 per cent in comparison to its resident population (IOM 2020:24).[1] Despite these numbers, it is interesting to note that in the field of migration studies, Fiji has attracted far less attention to date compared to other countries in Oceania that are characterized by large-scale mobility such as Samoa and Tonga. Moreover, while a handful of scholars have explored migration patterns and routes between Fiji and the aforementioned English-speaking countries in the Pacific Rim or within the Pacific Islands, little is known about Fiji Islanders and, by extension, other Pacific Islander migrant populations in those parts of Asia that are

Source: Dominik Schieder.

Figure 3: An advertisement for an Osaka-based food bar owned by a migrant from Fiji, 2012.

Source: Dominik Schieder.

Figure 4: A meeting of the Fiji Community in Tokyo, 2013.

located in or bordering the Pacific (but see Besnier 2012; 'Esau 2007).[2]

This article aims to contribute to Pacific Islander mobility studies. It mainly builds on fieldwork, which I conducted on Fiji Islander life worlds and community patterns in Japan in 2012-13 (Schieder 2015) but also takes into consideration more recent developments.[3] The article follows two particular aims. Firstly, it provides general information on trans-border mobility between Fiji and Japan, also contextually referring to other nodes of the Fiji diaspora. Secondly, it engages in more detail with two of the main reasons why Fiji Islanders move for short periods, temporarily migrate or even settle down in Japan: education and professional sport (here: rugby). While these facets of Fiji Islander mobility will be discussed in separate sections, they occasionally overlap to various, at times considerable degrees in individual cases and should be understood as heuristics lenses rather than categories that can be neatly separated.

Before I proceed, a note on terminology is warranted: Fiji is a multi-ethnic society and mainly constituted by indigenous Fijians (henceforth: Fijians) and Indo-Fijians. In 2007, they made up 94.3 per cent of the total population (56.8 per cent Fijians and 37.5 per cent Indo-Fijians) with the remaining being mainly of Chinese, European, Rotuman, other Pacific Islander and mixed-ethnic origin (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2008).[4] While to this day, the majority of Fiji's emigrants remain Indo-Fijians, the number of Fijians leaving the country for longer periods or indefinitely is growing (Voigt-Graf 2008). In this article, I employ the term 'Fiji Islanders' to refer to persons from Fiji (i.e. born in Fiji, raised in Fiji, self-identifying as from Fiji etc.) regardless of their ethnic backgrounds but will specify if I am referring to certain Fiji Islanders in the discussion. For example, while Fiji Islanders are engaged in educational mobility, the absolute majority of rugby players from Fiji in Japan are indigenous Fijians

Fiji Islanders in Japan

Given that Fiji and Japan have not shared colonial connections, it was only after Fiji gained independence from the British Empire in 1970, that bilateral relations were established and cross-border mobility put into motion. Japan was one of the first countries to endorse Fiji as an independent state in 1970 and has been placing a particular focus on health, environmental issues, climate change and education as part of its official development assistance (ODA) to Fiji (as well as other Pacific Island countries) (MOFA 2016). Existing interconnections are also increasingly shaped by a growing Japanese interest in regional geopolitics triggered by China's rising influence in Oceania (Envall 2020; Tarte 2005, 2018). Japan has been a trading partner for Fiji (and other Pacific Island states) for decades. Although its economic interests in island Oceania is marginal on a global scale, they play some role in these small countries' economies. Japan has been importing food (especially fish, crustaceans and molluscs), as well as manufactured goods (especially wood and cork products) from Fiji whereas Japanese exports to Fiji are mainly made up by machinery and transport equipment as well as mineral fuels (Pacific Islands Centre 2020).

In addition, tourist mobility between Japan and Fiji has been an important link between the two countries prior to the current global COVID-19 pandemic in terms of its benefits to Fiji's local tourism industry (ibid.).

The first nine Fiji Islanders in Japan were statistically recorded for 1974. They arrived in the country as part of diplomatic missions and for educational purposes; the later have been playing a prominent role in fostering mobility between Fiji and Japan ever since.[5] Data offered by the Japanese government shows that numbers increased only slowly in the consecutive decades but more rapidly in recent years. Yet, they remain low in comparison to other Pacific destinations such as Australia and New Zealand, never comprising more than a few hundred individuals. This is due to the specific reasons that allow foreigners more generally to enter (and remain in) Japan according to the country's strict immigration policies (Douglass & Roberts 2003; Healy et al. 2016; Liu-Farrer 2020).

In 2019, 287 Fiji Islanders were statistically recorded in Japan (excluding diplomats and persons on holiday or business trips). More than fifty percent of them were located in the Kantō area, which contains Tokyo and six of its neighbouring prefectures. Moreover, smaller clusters existed in a few other prefectures such as Aichi, Fukuoka and Osaka. Very small numbers were spread throughout other parts of Japan. The sex ratio has remained stable for several years with approximately 30 per cent female to 70 per cent male in similar fashion to the age distribution with the majority of Japan-based Fiji Islanders being between 20 to 29 as well as 30 to 39 years old (i.e. 29 per cent and 36 per cent of the total). As will become evident below, there is a clear correlation between the age structure of the migrant group and two of the main reasons for the presence of Fiji Islanders in Japan: education and professional rugby. Moreover, there is indication of a slowly growing second generation of Japan-based persons of Fiji Islander descent, many of whom are the children of Fiji Islander-Japanese couples and hold Japanese citizenship. Marriages between Fiji Islanders and Japanese or other nationals had been common at the time of my research in 2012-13 and mainly concerned Fijian and Indo-Fijian men married to Japanese or other Asian women. Concurrently, chain migration played only a very marginal role at that time. Most of the Fiji Islanders I have worked with hailed from urban areas or had lived in towns for longer periods of their lives before leaving Fiji. Almost all of them had transnational connections to relatives in Australia, the U.S. and other countries and a few arrived in Japan via the diaspora. While no official statistical data on the ethnic composition of the migrant group exists, a survey I conducted during my fieldwork revealed that it broadly resembled Fiji's population structure at that time (cf. Schieder 2015:174-177).

Comparing the 2019 figures with statistical data concerning the period during which I conducted fieldwork in Japan reveals that the group of Japan-based Fiji Islanders has been increasing steadily in the last years (from 181 in 2012 to 287 in 2019). This development is particularly related to a growing number of student visa holders and persons on a so called 'engineer/specialist in humanities/international services' visa; the later connotes a broad category that lumps together various employment sectors and is applicable to foreigners who have secured work contracts in the country, such as English language instructors employed with private companies.[6] At the same time, the number of Fiji Islanders holding 'instructor' visas, which qualify them to teach at governmental institutions such as primary and high schools, has remained relatively stable. In conclusion, it is fair to argue that education in its various forms remains one of the most significant reasons for the presence of Fiji Islanders in Japan.[7]

Education: students, trainees and teachers

Education-related mobility between Fiji and Japan has to be evaluated against the backdrop of international relations between the two countries as well as, albeit to a lesser degree, in respect to Fiji Islanders seeking employment opportunities abroad in the (private) educational sector. Statistical data offered by the Japanese government for 2019 reveals that 74 out of the total of 287 registered Fiji Islanders in Japan in that year held 'student', 'trainee' or 'instructor' visas with students (60) making up by far the largest group (Immigration Services Agency of Japan 2021a). In addition, and based on previous research experiences, it is fair to assume that a significant number amongst those 40 Fiji Islanders holding an 'engineer/specialist in humanities/international services' visa have also been engaged in educational work.

As part of its ODA initiatives, Japan not only sends material aid, aid workers and volunteers to the Pacific Islands. From the outset of bilateral relations between the two countries Japan has also been regularly inviting Fiji Islanders to obtain degrees and training at Japanese universities in areas such as agriculture, environmental conservation, management, pedagogy and science education. There are different opportunities for Fiji Islanders who wish to pursue education in Japan. For example, they can apply for the Japanese government's prestigious *Monbukagakusho* scholarship, which derives its name from the governmental institution in charge of the program (i.e. the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MEXT) and is open to nationals of various countries. Another venue to explore is MEXT's scholarship for 'teaching training students', which allows teachers from Fiji to enhance their skills in Japan. In light of more recent developments, Fiji (and other Pacific) Islanders have also been able to join the Pacific Leaders' Educational Assistance for Development of State (Pacific-LEADS) program to secure degrees in fields such as public management, policy analysis and international development at Japanese universities.[8] Other scholarships are offered by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as part of its Kizuna program (which focuses on development issues related to mining) and the newly established SDGs Global Leadership program. More generally, JICA plays an instrumental role in implementing and administering Japan's ODA in Fiji and beyond. With the exception of the Monbukagakusho scholarship, the educational programs open to Fiji Islanders particularly target civil and public servants who are commonly nominated and/or approved by Fiji's govern-

Figure 5: Two Fijian teachers preparing kava at the 2012 Fiji Independence Day celebrations in Yokohama.

ment. In that light, most scholarships available concern graduate (M.A.) or postgraduate (Ph.D.) education and students are expected to return to Fiji upon graduation and to resume their ministerial or teaching jobs.[9]

In addition, a limited number of scholarship opportunities, for example for undergraduate students, are offered by private Japanese corporations at irregular intervals (e.g. EFT 2019). Finally, some Japanese universities have been offering scholarships to male Fiji Islander students with the prime reason to boost their rugby teams. As I will show in the next section, there is a growing development in this area. Therefore, student mobility in the context of Fiji, its diaspora and Japan also has to be evaluated against the backdrop of what young Fiji Islanders (especially Fijian men) offer to Japanese educational institutions in terms of their sporting abilities.

Education related mobility between Fiji and Japan does not only concern students but also teachers from Fiji and Fiji Islanders previously unrelated to this profession who take up English teaching jobs in Japan. These Fiji Islanders form part of a broader movement of Pacific Islander professionals who seek greener pastures abroad in terms of employment opportunities for a number of interrelated reasons and who, in terms of professional teachers, have become "mobile knowledge workers in the global labour market" (Iredale et al. 2015:98).

Teacher mobility within the Pacific Islands and the Pacific Rim has been documented for some time (e.g. Iredale et al. 2015; Rokoduru 2006; Voigt-Graf 2003) without, however, paying much attention to potential Asian destination countries. In the case of Japan, there are various channels Fiji Islanders can pursue to gain access to teaching-related opportunities (cf. Schieder 2015:175-176). Some Fiji Islander who have a background in professional teaching have been engaged with the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) since 2011. JET, which is officially co-coordinated by different Japanese ministries and local government institutions has been officially implemented in 1987 and aims at fostering "mutual understanding between the people of Japan and the people of other nations" (JET 2021a). The program targets international exchange on a community level and draws on teachers from countries such as Fiji where English is a 'native' language and the professional level of education prospective teachers undergo is high (cf. Iredale et al. 2015; Rokoduru 2006:174). For this purpose, JET allows foreign nationals to be temporarily deployed to Japanese schools and other government organisations, where they are responsible for assisting Japanese teachers in enhancing foreign language proficiency as well as inter-cultural awareness and sensitivity among Japanese pupils and students. Apart from Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) which make up more than 90 percent of JET activities, positions are available in the fields of international relations and sports activity coordination. In 2019, JET included more than 5,700 participants from 57 countries, including one ALT and two Sports Exchange Advisors from Fiji (JET 2021b). Currently, there is also a small number of Fiji Islanders contracted to Japanese boards of education and governmental schools (mainly on a primary and secondary level) where they are working as ALTs. These are islanders who have opted to

Source: Dominik Schieder.

Figure 6: A Rotuman corporate rugby player, 2012.

remain for indefinite periods in Japan and can draw on extensive teaching experiences, which they acquired before moving to Japan.

Apart from Fiji Islanders working in state-run schools, Japan has attracted individuals from Fiji with or without a background in teaching who seek employment in the private educational sector. Most often, they take up jobs as English teachers with one of countless private language schools and companies which mainly operate in metropolitan areas such as Tokyo and Osaka. Sometimes they work as freelance teachers. Another migration channel related to education which I identified while doing research in Japan, concerned a few teachers from Fiji formerly employed with Free Bird Institute Ltd. (FBI). FBI is a private Japanese company founded in 2004, which successfully operates English-language schools in two Fijian towns (Nadi and Lautoka). To promote their business, the company highlights Fiji's former status as a British colony, the friendliness of its people (commonly highlighted also for touristic purposes) which students can experience, for example on 'home stays', and the low cost of FBI's programs in comparison to similar language schools in countries such as the UK. FBI has been particularly popular in Japan and other East Asian countries and was able to attract more than 1,000 students annually prior to the current COVID-19 pandemic (FBI 2021). In the past, the two FBI schools in Fiji were also meeting hubs for Japanese students and their future partners who opted to emigrate to Japan, where they found employment in the teaching sector. While I am not aware of similar cases in more recent years, FBI nevertheless continues to influence trans-border mobility in the present case as it has expanded its portfolio to include an employment agency more recently with the aim to cater for Japanese companies interested in contracting Fiji Islanders (see endnote 7). In addition to education and at times overlapping with it, professional sport in the form of rugby is one of the most significant factors for the presence of Fiji Islanders in Japan.

Professional sport: rugby[10]

One of the striking features of rugby in its current professional state is the inclusion of large numbers of Pacific Islanders in domestic competitions and national teams in various parts around the globe (e.g. Horton 2012). Among Pacific Islanders engaged in the rugby industry, Fijians and, to a far lesser extent, Rotumans and Fiji Islanders of mixed ethnic descent feature prominently. In this context, Japan has been a destination for athletes from Fiji and the Fiji diaspora (e.g. Australia and New Zealand) as well as other Pacific Islanders for several decades (Besnier 2012; Sakata 2004; Schieder 2014).[11]

The appearance of Fiji Islanders in the Japanese rugby world has to be evaluated against the backdrop of the history and structure of domestic rugby in Japan, i.e. corporate and university rugby. A survey I conducted in early 2021 has revealed that for the Top League season, i.e. the prime domestic rugby competition in Japan, the 16 participating teams featured a total of twelve Fijians, one Rotuman and a further three athletes of part-Fijian descent. The nine best second-tier teams that also participate in the current make-up of the Top League, fielded another nine Fijians, making

Source: Dominik Schieder.

Figure 7: A Fijian rugby player representing Japan internationally, 2014.

it 25 athletes of (part-)Fiji Islander descent in total. Fijians also represent Japanese university rugby teams. While numbers are difficult to establish due to fluctuation and the lack of concrete figures, several students of Fijian origin are currently active in that field and two of them even represented the winner of the prestigious Japan University Rugby Championship in 2021.[12]

The majority of Japan-based athletes of Fiji Islander origin compete with local and other foreign players in 'corporate rugby', a system unique to the country. Teams such as Toshiba Brave Lupus or Panasonic Wild Knights are not only sponsored but also owned by these globally renowned corporations. The same holds true for the teams of smaller and less known companies such as Hino Motors Ltd. or the Kintetsu Corporation. Japanese rugby teams have a unique heritage. While current Top League sides and even some lower tier teams field professional players who are contracted as full-time athletes, corporate rugby began as an amateur endeavour and has partially remained so ever since. In its beginnings, employees such as office and factory workers (Japanese and foreigners alike) devoted parts of their working life and free time to their company's rugby team. While corporate rugby has been gradually moving towards more professionalism, a strong corporate ethos remains intrinsic to Japanese rugby and some teams still contain amateurs (Light et al. 2008; Sakata 2004).[13] At the same time, corporate rugby remains closely linked to university rugby, as many of the best players who wish to pursue the sport beyond their studies make up the bulk of company teams to this day. In that sense, Japanese universities have been serving as entry points for Pacific Islanders to corporate rugby and, eventually, as is evident in some cases, a career as a national (Japanese) representative (Besnier 2012; Light et al. 2008; Schieder 2014).

Although less significant than baseball, sumo wrestling or soccer (Maguire & Nakayama 2006), rugby has gained much popularity in Japan in the lead up to the 2019 men's Rugby World Cup which was hosted in the country. This development is closely linked to the outstanding performances of Japan's national male fifteen-a-side team, the 'Brave Blossoms' during and in the aftermath of the tournament. More generally, Japan has slowly turned into one of the top ten rugby playing nations worldwide. This success has been fuelled by the systematic inclusion of foreign-born players into the 'Brave Blossoms' from the 1990s onwards, starting with Tongans and Fijians and expanding to Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans. Currently, there are one Fijian and one athlete of part-Fijian descent in the 'Brave Blossom's' 2021 wider training squad (JRFU 2021a). Significantly, the Japan Rugby Football Union (JRFU) aims to replicate the international success of the 'Brave Blossoms' in sevens rugby. Given Fiji's success in this fast-paced and shortened variation of the rugby union code with seven instead of fifteen players per team (e.g. winning two consecutive Olympic gold medals in 2016 and 2021), and the inclusion of numerous Fijians in national sevens squads all around the globe, it is perhaps unsurprising that Fijians have been a common sight in Japan's sevens teams for some time. For example, the 2020 men's sevens development squad featured five Fijians among the 29 prospective athletes

and an additional wider training group of eleven players included another four Fijians, making it nearly a quarter of the total (JRFU 2020).[14]

A few years ago, I proposed the existence of four ideal types of Fiji Islander athletes in Japan (Schieder 2014:260-262), which remains a useful heuristic tool to judge more contemporary developments. A first category consists of Fijian provincial and amateur players who have been scouted in Fiji, some of whom eventually have been representing Japan on an international level. While this type of athlete was the most common one in the early days of foreign player recruitment in Japan, for example due to their willingness to accept lower wages than many other foreigners, the recruitment of amateur players in the islands has become of little significance in more recent years for Top League and lower tier teams. A second category contains Fiji Islander athletes who have received rugby education abroad or were exposed to professional rugby outside Fiji before they arrived in Japan while maintaining Fiji as their home. Among these are younger men who wish to use Japan as a stepping stone for more prestigious contracts, for example in New Zealand, France or England, as well as athletes who were contracted for a limited number of years in other countries before moving to Japan. However, like their amateur counterparts, this type of athletes has become less prominent in Japan in more recent years. Rather, the Japanese rugby world has seen the growing significance of two other types of athletes of Fiji Islander origin. Consequently, a third category refers to Fiji Islanders who left Fiji at an early stage or were born in the diaspora. Athletes of these type come from a variety of backgrounds. For example, some attend high schools and universities in Australia and New Zealand and were recruited by corporate teams afterwards. Others were born or raised in these popular destinations of Fiji Islander emigrants and were active in 'Super Rugby' (i.e. one of the prime rugby competitions in the world) before coming to Japan. What all of these athletes have in common is that they benefitted from structured approaches to professional sporting careers before arriving in Japan. The fourth category, which also appears to grow steadily in recent years, concerns young Fijian men who are admitted to Japanese universities all around the country, especially via scholarships. These Fijians not only represent their educational institutions in domestic competitions such as the Japan University Rugby Championship, but many are also later contracted by corporate teams and some included in Japanese national teams.

In conclusion, there is a trend that more and more Fiji Islanders, especially Fijians, enter university and corporate rugby via diasporic locations; a trend which is clearly linked to the ongoing professionalization of the sport in Japan. Moreover, there is a visible development in more recent years towards a growing number of Fijian 'rugby students' to remain in Japan after graduation. These young men eventually join corporate teams and some are invited for trials conducted by the JRFU. While the JRFU recruits Fiji Islanders on a potentially higher level than has been done in the past, it remains to be seen what role these young Fijians will play in Japanese rugby in the future to come.

Conclusion

Building on an introduction of trans-border mobility between Fiji and Japan, also taking into consideration other diasporic nodes, this article has presented two of the main reasons why a growing number of Fiji Islanders spend (in)definite periods of their lives in Japan. While education and professional sport in most cases lead to stays for shorter and intermediate periods, they might also foster (more) permanent settlement. This is evident in respect to students and rugby players who got married to Japanese men and women in the past or university graduates who took up employment in Japan and opted to remain in the country.

More generally, in some cases education, professional sport and other factors that trigger mobility become intertwined. For example, one Fijian man who currently lives in Japan, is a professional athlete and represents the Japanese national rugby sevens team, arrived in the country due to his marriage to a former Japanese JICA volunteer. Initially, he was employed as a road maintenance worker and played rugby on an amateur level in his area of residency when he was scouted by the JRFU. Another Fijian man arrived in Japan as the spouse of a Fijian woman who worked as an English language instructor but secured a short-term contract with a lower tier corporate rugby team. At the same time, marriage migration potentially introduces Japan-based Fiji Islanders to jobs in the Japanese educational sector. This does not only apply to cases related to former Free Bird Institute Ltd. teachers as discussed above. For instance, a few Japan-based Fiji Islanders, who met their Japanese spouses while they were holidaying in Fiji, found employment as English instructors in private language schools or commenced work as freelance English instructors after they moved to Japan.[15]

These examples raise awareness of the complexities of mobility trajectories and reveal that mobility categories such as the ones outlined in this article are not exclusive but potentially overlap in regard to the lived experiences of mobile persons (e.g. Brettell 2003; Carter 2011). In this sense, the material presented in this contribution serves the purpose of providing an overview of the structural framework of Fiji Islander mobility between Fiji, other diasporic nodes and Japan. The individual life worlds that materialize within this context warrant further and more detailed exploration elsewhere.

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Endnotes

[1)] In comparison, Fiji's total population in 2017 was 884.887 (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2018).

[2)] See Keck & Schieder 2015 for a slightly dated literature review.

[3)] This article builds on twelve months of fieldwork conducted predominantly in Tokyo and the Kantō area in 2012 and 2013 as well as a brief follow-up visit to Tokyo in late 2015. It also draws on written (re-)sources such as statistical data and newspaper articles in regard to more recent developments.

[4)] A short and useful overview of the ethnic composition of Fiji's population is offered by Naidu (2013:8-18). Note that no statistical material on 'ethnicity' has been released by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics in reference to the 2017 Census.

[5)] All statistical data used in this section has been provided by the

Source: Fuyuko Mochizuki.

Figure 8: A meeting of the Fiji Community in Tokyo, 2013.

Immigration Services Agency of Japan (2021a). Although no reliable data exists for previous years, the presence of Fiji Islanders in Japan prior to 1974 cannot be ruled out.

[6] The Immigration Services Agency of Japan defines this visa category as applicable to "(c)ontracted positions with public or private organizations which utilize technology or specialized knowledge in fields related to physics, engineering, natural science, law, economy, and sociology; or those which require an understanding of or sensitivity to foreign cultures" (2021b).

[7] In addition to education and professional sport, Fiji Islanders have engaged in other work-related activities in Japan. They include missionaries, car mechanics, entrepreneurs, salary (wo)men and care workers. Moreover, a few years ago the operator of Tokyo's Narita International Airport initiated an overseas recruitment scheme and has, since 2018, hired nine Fiji Islanders. Their recruitment was facilitated by Free Bird Institute Ltd., a Japanese company I also refer to in this article's section on education-related mobility.

[8] The Pacific-LEADS program was initiated in 2015 as part of the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) initiative. This forum was created by Japan in 1997 which hosts summit-level meetings with various countries from Oceania (incl. Australia and New Zealand) every three years (JICA 2021; MOFA 2021).

[9] Monbukagakusho scholarship holders on the other hand do not necessarily fall under these restrictions. In 2012-13 I met several former students who opted to remain in the country for family and/or professional reasons after their graduation.

[10] Throughout, I focus on rugby union and do not include rugby league, i.e. the second prominent rugby code, given that it is rugby union that fosters mobility between Fiji, its diaspora and Japan.

[11] For example, Sakata (2004:51) found that in the 2002 Top League competition, 38 percent of foreign players originated from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Given that athletes from Australia and New Zealand constituted another 59 percent of the total and that a number of athletes of Pacific Island descent based in Japan at that time held passports of these countries, the actual number of Pacific Islanders playing in Japan's best domestic competition around the turn of the century must be evaluated even higher.

[12] While further research is needed to establish accurate numbers, I could establish that at least nine Japanese university teams, some of which belong to the best in the country, included Fiji Islanders in the last three years.

[13] At the time of writing, corporate rugby faces major changes. Earlier in 2021, the JRFU announced the start of a restructured and fully professional three-tier rugby competition in January 2022 in favour of its current corporate make-up. The JRFU aims to elevate the level of Japanese rugby and to bring it in line with domestic competitions in countries such as Australia and New Zealand (JRFU 2021b).

[14] Similar developments are visible with regard to the women's national sevens side. For example, the team that competed in the Tokyo Olympics included one player of Fijian-Japanese descent who was born in Japan. Until very recently another Fiji-born athlete also featured for Japan's national fifteens team.

[15] While the (visa) category 'spouse' has remained relatively stable, it is interesting to note that the number of permanent residents of Fiji Islander origin in Japan has increased from 28 in 2012 to 59 in 2019. While it can be assumed that many permanent residents are spouses of Japanese men and women, further research is required to validate this hypothesis.

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„Micronexit": Regionalism in confusion

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Abstract: Pacific regionalism is in a severe crisis after the Micronesian states Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia have announced their withdrawal from the most important regional organization, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). This article discusses the reasons for the split that go beyond the mere selection of a new Secretary General of the Forum as the major trigger of the withdrawal and analyses possible consequences of the split within Oceania and beyond. It argues that characterizing "Micronexit" as a result of diverging interests between the United States and China is an oversimplification that ignores intraregional causes of the conflict. There are manifold divisions amongst PIF's member states, which can lead to a decline of cooperation in the Pacific Islands' region, even outside the Forum structures, e.g. at the United Nations, if no solution to the impasse can be found.

Keywords: Pacific Islands Forum, Regional Cooperation, Micronesia, US, China

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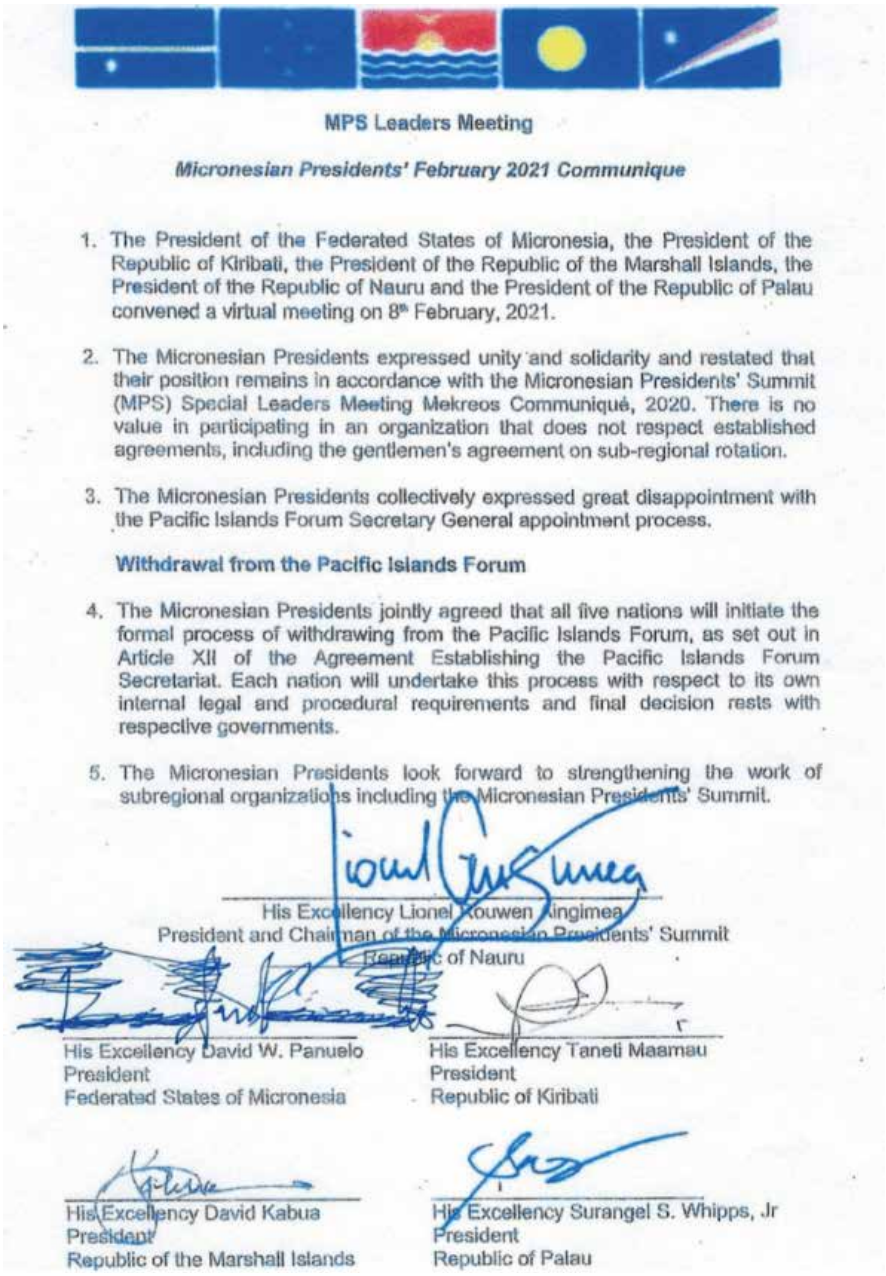
Introduction

Pacific regionalism is in one of its most severe crises since the independence of the Pacific Islands Countries (PICs). The five Micronesian states Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) have announced their withdrawal from the region's premier institution of political cooperation, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), following the election of the former Prime Minister of the Polynesian Cook Islands, Henry Puna, as the new Secretary General of the Forum. The withdrawal of the Micronesian states may not only result in a loss of importance of the most critical regional organization, but may also reshape how the region is perceived and defined in Oceania and by the outside world.

The first half of 2021 has been a fateful year for Pacific politics and regional cooperation more generally. New COVID-19 outbreaks in Papua New Guinea and Fiji and increasing economic impacts from the pandemic have flawed the image of the PICs as role models for the management of the pandemic. Samoa, praised as the most stable country in the Pacific for decades, is experiencing political instability following an election and the caretaker government's refusal to transfer the power to its successor. The controversy about the future of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP) has increased significantly after Fiji has expelled the University's Vice-President to frustrate ambitions to limit Fiji's influence over the institution. And the passing away of Papua New Guinea's first Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, a strong advocate for Pacific regionalism, was mourned in the entire region and perceived by many as a bad sign for the future of regionalism.

While there is no extensive literature on the "Micronexit" and its consequences yet, it is striking to see the wide variety of different assessments as well as the emotionality and excitement in the debate even by some academics, ranging from decidedly Micronesian perspectives (Teaiwa et al. 2021; Penjueli 2021) to descriptions of the behaviour of the Micronesian states as "toddler's tantrum" (Flitton 2021) that has been criticised as "neo-colonial" (Teaiwa et al. 2021). Interestingly, also a comparatively large number of media and think tanks from outside Oceania that usually hardly give attention to the region attested pivotal geopolitical and strategic significance to the split of the Forum. They especially referred to the rivalry between the United States of America and China as a major source for the regional conflict (e.g. Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik 2021; The Diplomat 2021a).

Is the Micronesian withdrawal from the Forum a "move of tectonic scale whose impact will reverberate across the region" (Penjueli 2021) or just another "momentous development in the long history of Pacific regionalism" (Fry 2021a)? Does the Forum and its potential breakdown actually matter, both in general (Flitton 2021a) and to the governments of its member states (Howes & Sen 2021)? And what role have external actors like the US and China truly played in the escalation? This article will discuss possible causes and consequences of the regional split as well as possible ways forward to overcome the division in regional politics. It examines statements by Pacific leaders, articles and blog posts published by scholars from within and outside the Pacific region following the division of the Forum, but also draws on scientific literature on the broader history of Pacific regionalism. It also assesses possi-



MPS Leaders Meeting

Micronesian Presidents' February 2021 Communique

1. The President of the Federated States of Micronesia, the President of the Republic of Kiribati, the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the President of the Republic of Nauru and the President of the Republic of Palau convened a virtual meeting on 8th February, 2021.

2. The Micronesian Presidents expressed unity and solidarity and restated that their position remains in accordance with the Micronesian Presidents' Summit (MPS) Special Leaders Meeting Mekreos Communiqué, 2020. There is no value in participating in an organization that does not respect established agreements, including the gentlemen's agreement on sub-regional rotation.

3. The Micronesian Presidents collectively expressed great disappointment with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General appointment process.

Withdrawal from the Pacific Islands Forum

4. The Micronesian Presidents jointly agreed that all five nations will initiate the formal process of withdrawing from the Pacific Islands Forum, as set out in Article XII of the Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Each nation will undertake this process with respect to its own internal legal and procedural requirements and final decision rests with respective governments.

5. The Micronesian Presidents look forward to strengthening the work of subregional organizations including the Micronesian Presidents' Summit.

His Excellency Lionel Aingimea
President and Chairman of the Micronesian Presidents' Summit
Republic of Nauru

His Excellency David W. Panuelo
President
Federated States of Micronesia

His Excellency Taneti Maamau
President
Republic of Kiribati

His Excellency David Kabua
President
Republic of the Marshall Islands

His Excellency Surangel S. Whipps, Jr
President
Republic of Palau

Source: Micronesian Presidents' Summit (MPS).

Figure 1: Joint communiqué of the presidents of the five Micronesian countries on their intention to cease their membership in the Pacific Islands Forum.

ble motivations and influence on the development of actors in Oceania and abroad by considering their broader strategies, alliances and previous diplomatic actions.

The withdrawal of the Micronesian states

The Forum was established in 1971. It currently has 18 members, including the Micronesian states whose withdrawal will come into effect in February 2022, all other independent PICs, Australia and New Zealand as well as the French territories New Caledonia and French Polynesia. On 4 February 2021, the heads of state and government of the member states of the Forum convened for a digital meeting for the election of a new Secretary General as the term of the incumbent Dame Meg Taylor from Papua New Guinea came to an end. After a lengthy meeting, Henry Puna, who resigned from his political duties in the Cook Islands prior to the election, was elected new Secretary General. He received one more vote than his adversary Gerald Zackios from the Micronesian Marshall Islands. Subsequent to Puna's election, the Micronesian states announced their joint withdrawal from the Forum. They legally confirmed their exit by individual notes communicated to Fiji in its capacity as the host of the Forum Secretariat in the following weeks (ABC 2021).

The Micronesian states had argued at least since 2019, but also prior to previous elections, that they finally wanted to see a Micronesian candidate being elected as the new head of Forum Secretariat and protested vocally against the nomination of candidates from other sub-regions by their national governments, including next to Puna Fiji's former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Amelia Kinahoi Siamoma as the only female candidate from Tonga and Solomon Islands' Jimmie Rodgers (Fry 2021a; Penjueli 2021).

In fact, the position of the Secretary General of the Forum was only once held by a Micronesian, the first president of Kiribati, Ieremia Tabai, from 1992 to 1998. The Micronesian states argue that there is an informal "gentlemen's agreement" established in 1978 on the rotation of the Secretary General among the three subregions Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, (before some of the Micronesian states joined the Forum). Other states in the Pacific region have denied the existence or at least validity of such an agreement, something Penjueli has called "collective amnesia" by Pacific Leaders (Penjueli 2021). However, some scholars argue that the Micronesian claim for the existence of the agreement were "borne out by subsequent practice" and by some fundamental reforms changing the structure of the Forum's Secretariat (Fry 2021a). They also point to another gentlemen's agreement established at the foundation of the Forum to ensure that future Secretary Generals would not come from Australia or New Zealand that got obsolete with the election of the Australian Greg Urwin in 2004 (op. cit.).

'Zooming' out of the Pacific Way?

Informal rotation agreements on the selection of high-ranking officials are not unique to the Pacific region. They for instance also exist at the United Nations (UN), even though regional rotation has not been honoured in the selection of the current UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. Pacific cooperation, though, has always relied much more on informal rules than cooperation elsewhere. For many decades, Pacific regionalism is based on the informal concept of the 'Pacific Way'. While there is no written agree-

Source: Marshall Islands Journal.

Figure 2: Zoom meeting of Forum leaders to elect a new Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum in February 2021.

ment on what constitutes the Pacific Way, experts and policy makers agree that it is characterized by consensus, solidarity, and the upholding of traditional Pacific customs (Crocombe 1976). It also has been described as a "norm of diplomacy" based on unity, Pacific brotherhood, a sense of cultural affinity, equal treatment and informal incrementalism (Haas 1989). The informality of regional cooperation in Oceania has helped governments to keep the costs for regional cooperation relatively low and the system of regional cooperation relatively flexible, but also has been a burden for further institutionalization and accountability.

Despite several attempts of institutionalization, also the Pacific Islands Forum as the most important regional organization remains rather informal in its structure. At the heart of the Forum are the annual high-level meetings of the Pacific heads of state and government, the so-called "Leaders' Retreats" that combine decision-making with personal interaction and a cultural side program, "where eating and kava drinking together creates many opportunities to discuss and 'pre-decide' things at an informal level" (Mückler 2021).

Even though the Pacific countries were hit less dramatically by the Covid-19 pandemic than other regions in February 2021, prior to the new outbreaks in Papua New Guinea and Fiji, there were strict entry regulations and have been no physical meetings of all Forum leaders since their last retreat in August 2019 in Tuvalu. Several attempts by the Tuvaluan Prime Minister Kausea Natano, who still holds the rotating chairmanship over the Forum, to further postpone the election of the Secretary General because of the Covid-19 pandemic to the next physical retreat planned in Fiji later this year were rejected by several states (Penjueli 2021).

Because Pacific regionalism is usually centred on personal and direct interaction, combined with a great sense of hospitality of the Forum retreats' host countries, digital diplomacy is even more challenging than elsewhere in the world. In fact, in the long-run, at least theoretically, the PICs could even benefit from virtual diplomacy to reduce the negative consequences of their isolation. But because of the sensitivity of the issue it is likely that the absence of personal interactions and room for manoeuvre, including backroom deals, have contributed to the split of the Forum. It has at least favoured regional distrust and the emergence of regional divisions that have been under the surface. Mückler (2021) describes traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in the Pacific as impressive and even as role models for other parts of the world, but believes that they are not working during the pandemic when there are no physical meetings, which resulted in a "changed culture and dynamics of discussion".

Since the Pacific Way is centered on the idea of making decisions in consensus, the very fact that there was a competitive vote about the Secretary-General is remarkable. Voting was confidential, but there are some well-founded assessments on the probable voting behaviour of the individual Forum members. Most likely, Puna was supported by the Polynesian countries as well as French Polynesia, Fiji, Australia and New Zealand, while the Melanesian states Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands supported the Micronesian bloc (Penjueli 2021), some of them like Papua New Guinea issuing statements after the election to punctuate their support for Zackios. New Caledonia did not participate in the vote because of a recent change in government.

Neglect or detachment?

The causes of the split of the Forum go far beyond the mere selection of the new Forum Secretary General. The Micronesian decision to withdraw from the Forum needs to be understood as the result of a more persistent feeling of being neglected with their interests in regional decision-making. As the former President of Palau, Tommy Remengesau Jr, said, "[t]his is something bigger than just the PIF secretary-general position – it's about respect, it's about fairness" (ABC 2021).

Especially the three former US ter-

ritories Marshall Islands, FSM and Palau that gained independence considerably later than other PICs and still maintain Compacts of Free Association (COFA) with the US have been "sidelined in Pacific regional issues", partly due to geographic distance, but primarily "due to historical and political dissimilarities" (Lowe Gallen 2015:178). While Nauru was a founding member of the Pacific Islands Forum in 1971 and Kiribati joined in 1977, the Marshall Islands and FSM were admitted in 1987 and Palau only in 1995. After the admission of the three COFA states to the Forum, the institution changed its name from "South Pacific Forum" to its current name in 1998.

Amongst others, there is dissatisfaction among the COFA countries that New Caledonia and French Polynesia were granted full membership in the Forum in 2016, while US dependencies especially in Micronesia were never even granted associate membership, which the two French dependencies have had since 2006. Guam's former delegate in the US House of Representatives, Robert Underwood, even suggests that the division of the Forum "could have been avoided if Guam, the Northern Marianas and American Samoa were members of the forum" (Underwood 2021).

Lowe Gallen (2015:178) has argued that, while the COFA countries have been neglected in regional politics, this "may sometimes be self-perpetuated" and for many years after the admittance of the COFA states to the Forum "northern Micronesian participation in Pacific regional matters has largely been characterised by a sense of detachment" despite attempts by other PICs to include them. Some experts have also argued that the Micronesian states are not just victims in the process of selection of the new Forum Secretary General, but that their choice for "tactics of intimidation" may not have been "a diplomatic, well thought-out approach" and that "[c]omplaints that one's own confrontational tactics have not worked, and that this is unfair, are frivolous in a democratic secret ballot" (Mückler 2021).

A vote about Chinese and US influence in the Pacific?

Many institutions have linked the split of the Forum with the broader geopolitical competition between the US and China. This argument refers to the increasing influence of China in the Pacific and notes that Puna as the new Secretary General of the Forum is known for his close relationship to China from his time as Prime Minister of the Cook Islands (Milne 2021). His opponent, Zackios, in contrary is serving as the Marshallese ambassador to the US. Because of their special relationship with the US, it is likely that the Micronesian COFA countries are not happy about the profile of Puna.

However, the voting behaviour of many PICs can hardly be explained if the selection of Puna is only understood as a vote about Chinese and US influence in the region. Most importantly, not all of the Micronesian states are as close to the US and as sceptical of China as the COFA states. Nauru and Kiribati historically have closer ties to Australia and New Zealand than to the US, and the current i-Kiribati government has become one of the greatest proponents of Chinese influence in the region. Likewise, the Polynesian state Tuvalu that supposedly supported Puna in the vote is one of the few remaining PICs to recognize Taiwan.

Moreover, even if there are signs of a revivalism of the close ties between the COFA states and the US, it should not be overlooked that the relations always have been highly ambiguous and have rather experienced dire straits in recent years. Despite their close relationship, the three COFA countries are also among the strongest critics of the US on climate change and the nuclear legacy of the US in the Marshall Islands and have even tried to sue the US and other nuclear powers at international courts. The voting coincidence of the three countries with the US at the UN has declined significantly in recent years, most strikingly in the case of Palau from 96.7% of the contentious votes in the UN General Assembly in 2012 to only 33% in 2019 (US Department of State 2020; Hasenkamp 2016), only partly a result of the former presidency of Donald Trump.

The role of Australia, New Zealand and Fiji

Characterizing the election simply as a vote about Chinese influence would also imply that Australia and New Zealand as close allies of the US have supported the Chinese bloc. It is more likely that Australia and New Zealand opted to support Puna because they hoped to be able to exert some

influence over the agenda of a Secretary General from the Cook Islands that have a free association with New Zealand. Penjueli (2021) even calls Puna the "de facto New Zealand and Australian candidate" and argues that Australia and New Zealand may profit most from the "sudden departure from the Pacific Way". This is a controversial argument given that other experts have argued some years ago that "manufactured consensus, patronizingly justified under the ideological rubric of Pacific Way, has often undermined the views of the smaller island states in favour the powerful countries like New Zealand and Australia" (Ratuva 2016:605).

The former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2021) also believes that "[i]f the forum implodes, Australia too would lose its formal seat at the table of the Pacific family", something that "would be strategically disastrous for Australia". With alternative vehicles of regional and international PICs' cooperation without Australia and New Zealand strengthened over the past decade, the two countries actually should have an interest in retaining their influence in regionalism by consolidating cooperation via the Forum. Indeed, Australia and New Zealand and their powerful role within the Forum are regularly criticised by the PICs, not only those from Micronesia, especially because the PICs feel alienated about their lack of support on climate change. Pushing through a "de facto Australian and New Zealand" candidate would have been a very difficult diplomatic task given the widespread criticism about their regional influence.

In contrast, there are some indications that by supporting Puna in the hope of retaining their own influence, Australia and New Zealand have made another grave diplomatic mistake. Penjueli (2021) agrees that "New Zealand and Australia may have miscalculated their level of influence" and it was a mistake that neither Jacinda Ardern nor Scott Morrison "attended in full the controversial Special Leaders Meeting" and that their "notable absence at such a crucial moment

Source: UN Photo-Mark Garten.

Figure 3: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and Fiji's Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama in Fiji in 2019.

challenges their commitment to our region". Unlike most PICs, Australia and New Zealand have much more diplomatic capacities that should have enabled them to better anticipate the reactions of the Micronesian states and the consequences for regionalism. Their larger diplomatic bureaucracies compared to the PICs, where decision-making is much more concentrated in heads of state and heads of government, also should have facilitated a less emotional approach towards the Micronesian threats to leave the organization.

Underestimating the conviction of the Micronesian states to leave the Forum and therefore the Australian and New Zealand sphere of influence altogether, would be the next serious diplomatic misjudgement of Australia and New Zealand with fundamental regional consequences after the suspension of Fiji from the Forum in 2009. Driven by Australia and New Zealand in the aftermath of the 2006 coup in Fiji, the suspension was never fully backed by most PICs. Unintended by Australia and New Zealand, and with support from China, Fiji arguably even benefited from the suspension. The country was quite successful in generating alternative vehicles of cooperation, increasing its activities in international politics, establishing Pacific islands cooperation without Australia and New Zealand at the UN and using the frustration of the neighbouring island states on climate change to establish itself as a regional adversary to Australia and New Zealand (Hasenkamp 2016).

Fiji always played an important role for regional cooperation as it is located in the centre of the region and host country not only of the Forum, but also many other regional and international institutions which combines cultural aspects associated with all three sub-regions. Politically, it used to identify itself as a Polynesian state after independence, but now belongs to the Melanesian bloc (Fry 2021a). The suspension was lifted automatically after elections in Fiji in 2014, but it took some years until Fiji gradually returned to the Forum. Having only come back to prime ministerial representation at the last Forum retreat in 2019, Fiji wanted to celebrate a cheerful comeback as incoming chair of the Forum, but may be one of those actors suffering most from the current regional impasse. Criticising Australia and New Zealand for not honouring the 'Pacific Way' for many years, Fiji now sees itself confronted with the same allegation and is criticised by the Micronesian countries for its support for Puna and rejection of a postponement of the election (arguably, underestimating the Micronesian response, to avoid negative associations with its upcoming chairmanship over the Forum). But also, some of its non-Micronesian neighbours are angered by Fiji's stance on the USP. Thus, Fiji is experiencing a dramatic decline of regional trust. Palau even announced it would close its embassy in Fiji. Being a critic of Fiji's influence for some time, Samoa's caretaker Prime Minister has started another attempt to move regional institutions from Fiji to Samoa.

Consequences for international politics

If the five Micronesian states are indefinitely to leave the Forum, this will reduce the organization's membership, "diminishing the organization's legitimacy as the peak regional body" (Ratuva & Teaiwa 2021). The consequences of the division go far beyond a mere loss of relevance

of one regional institution, though. Ratuva (2021) has pointed out that the division of the Forum is actually "not only political but deeply emotional and cultural" for many Pacific people to whom "the fractures within the Forum appear tantamount to a family breakup". If the PICs do not find a solution to overcome the division, this in the long-term possibly result in the outside world perceiving Oceania no longer as one region, but as separate North and South Pacific regions. This could further contribute to alienation from Pacific politics to the people living in and identifying with Oceania.

The crisis of the Forum and even more importantly the more profound underlying regional divisions, even among those states that remain in the Forum will, at least in the short run, result in a dramatic decline of Pacific cooperation even outside the Forum structures, with effects that will likely go far beyond the Pacific region. While regional and international cooperation of the Pacific states is likely to decline, bilateral relations in contrast will become more important. This is not good news for most PICs, because the small states usually have the less powerful roles in bilateral relations. Even though the dispute between the US and China over influence in the Pacific may not have been the fundamental trigger of the split, it will likely further increase the tensions between the super powers in the Pacific region, because the PICs will become more reliant on bilateral relations with larger states and when acting individually more vulnerable to their power games. This is even reinforced by the fact that a rather small number of states have elaborated bilateral relations to the individual Pacific states. Other possible partners next to the US, China or Australia and New Zealand like the European Union, whose members especially after the exit of Great Britain, have hardly any elaborated bilateral relations to the PICs, in contrast may suffer from the regional split, which is also revealed by a strong message from the European Union urging the PICs to overcome the division.

Over the last decade, the PICs have become much more active and self-confident in international politics, constituting an important voting bloc within the UN (Hasenkamp 2016). Fiji especially has advanced Pacific inter-islands cooperation via the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) grouping in recent years (Hasenkamp 2016) and has shown its ambition to take international responsibility by chairing the UN General Assembly, the 23rd United Nations Climate Change Conference and the 1st United Nations Ocean Conference, successfully portraying itself as a Pacific leader. Without the full backing of the PICs, Fiji's further ambitions, including the first ever election of a PICs to the United Nations Security Council, may be thwarted.

The PICs are among the most prominent advocates for strong climate action and played a significant role in including the goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C in the Paris Agreement. Recently, they also played an vital role in moving into force the UN Nuclear Ban Treaty. But soaring regional distrust makes it increasingly unlikely that the PICs will continue to speak with one voice in international affairs. This is especially tragic since the PICs continue to share similar positions on most global issues. The regional split comes at a very inconvenient moment with the important 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow ahead and many states being occupied by managing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic that will make it even more difficult for the PICs to receive attention for their interests.

If the Pacific states cease to speak with one voice on climate change in international politics, the international community would lose the PICs as a unified bloc that is holding the world accountable on the climate emergency. The effects could not only be disastrous for the Pacific countries, but also for the rest of the world, especially since climate action is more urgent than ever before after the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has revealed once again that the international community is far of track to reach the goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C or even 2° C.

The Forum's loss of importance may also prove to generate new obstacles to global climate action. Despite very fierce arguments over climate action between the PICs and especially Australia, the Forum has proved to be a platform for the PICs to obtain compromises from Australia that would have been more difficult to reach globally. The success of the PICs in convincing Australia to ultimately agree to the Forum's 2019 Kainaki II Declaration, including the agreement that global temperature rises should be limited to 1.5 °C – something Australia had opposed during the 2015 Paris Agreement negotiations – was a strong signal also on the international level.

Sub-regionalism – truly on the rise?

With the exit of the Micronesian countries the voice of the most vulnerable states to climate change within the Pacific Islands Forum will decline dramatically. Until recently, within the Forum, the Micronesian states and the Polynesian Cook Islands, Niue and Tuvalu formed the Smaller Islands States (SIS) grouping that was especially arguing for strong climate action. In contrast, until recently, the most important sub-regional platform of the Micronesian states, the Micronesian Presidents' Summit (MPS), only included the COFA states (Lowe Gallen 2015).

For a long time, it has been argued that sub-regionalism profits from the weakening of regional cooperation in the Pacific (Herr 1985). In fact, Micronesian sub-regionalism is on the rise and arguably stronger than ever before since the COFA states and Kiribati and Nauru are speaking with one voice, but it remains hardly institutionalized. Similar can be said about Polynesian sub-regionalism that has a much longer record with the Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG), but still remains rather loosely organized. The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), by far the most elaborated and institutionalized sub-regional organization, on the contrary is divided more than ever before. For some years now, cooperation within the MSG has been restrained by some arguments between its member states, particularly diverging opinions about the Indonesian human rights violations in West Papua and the West Papuan independence movement. The West Papua conflict has become highly emotional issues for the Pacific region (Lawson 2016). While Fiji and Papua New Guinea as the two most powerful Melanesian states sided with Indonesia, those two

states are now divided about the election of the new Secretary General of the PIF.

Possible Ways Forward

The exit of the Micronesian states will formally move into force one year after they have communicated their withdrawal to Fiji as the Forum's host country. This gives the PICs a few months to solve the impasse. Pacific politics and regional cooperation are thoroughly known to be fast moving and having sudden spins. But so far there are no signs of substantial de-escalation and the Pacific states are still in a deadlock. The Micronesian states continue to demand the withdrawal of Puna, who formally was inaugurated as new Secretary General in June 2021, and the installation of a Micronesian candidate as the prerequisite to stay in the Forum. Even though some regional leaders have offered apologies, there is no indication that those states that supported Puna in the election could increase their pressure to force him to step down or he voluntarily decides to abdicate. Even though Australia and New Zealand are in a difficult position, given that one of the few things most PICs likely continue to agree about is the wish to reduce the two countries' influence in the region, it is surprising to see that they have made little attempts to use their diplomatic leverage to contribute to solving the impasse.

However, there are chances to overcome the divisions if traditional mechanisms of reconciliation are activated, especially if physical meetings will soon be possible again. Previous regional disputes have shown that traditional practices on reconciliation can help to overcome even significant political divisions in Pacific diplomacy. The Solomon Islands for example hosted a traditional reconciliation ceremony to successfully overcome a dispute within the MSG in 2010 (May 2011). Since the next physical meeting was scheduled to take place in Fiji, the situation was even more complicated by the COVID-19 outbreak in Fiji in May 2021, which made a physical meeting anytime soon increasingly unlikely. Because of the outbreak, the 2021 leaders' summit of the members of the Forum finally again had to take place virtually in early August 2021.

Source: Pacific Islands Forum.

Figure 4: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres attends a meeting of Forum leaders in 2019.

It is likely that the former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2021) is right when he says that "[e]ven if a deal can be worked out before [the Micronesian states] formally exit […], the fact is that Pacific regionalism will never be the same". Indeed, a solution will require fundamental reform to the current system of regional cooperation, which also addresses issues like the great influence of Australia, New Zealand, and to a lesser extent Fiji. Many experts like Katerina Teaiwa and Steven Ratuva (2021) have suggested that a formalization of the informal 'gentlemen's agreement' on sub-regional rotation "to ensure that there is a sense of regional equity, diversity, fairness and balance in the way the Secretary General is selected" as well as a guarantee that the next Secretary General will come from Micronesia could be a basis for a compromise. The current crisis also could be taken as an occasion to approach a more fundamental reform of regional cooperation. Since most PICs agree that a reform of the institution should limit the influence of Australia and New Zealand on its agenda, the two larger countries could do their part by e.g. accepting that they are not participating in any future votes on the selection of Secretary Generals. Teaiwa and Ratuva (2021) propose a "reform to the highly centralized Suva/Fiji-based PIF structure to give more power and responsibility to the various sub-regions", e.g. by setting up sub-regional offices.

However, the formalization of agreements and the further institutionalization of Pacific regionalism could create further challenges for the idea of the Pacific Way. Referring to Ratuva (2021), "[t]here is an assumption that consensus has magical powers to address conflict, but the reality is that it also has the potential to generate and conceal conflict". Therefore, for any reforms it will be important to find a balance between retaining the informal system that offers flexibility which is necessary for regional cooperation in the Pacific and the institutionalization of controversial informal agreements that have the potential to generate future conflicts. This will require a broader discussion about the 'Pacific Way' to make sure there is agreement on what the concept actually contains and can accomplish, especially because the current regional dispute reminds us of the questions whether there really is "a single Pacific Way or [rather] multiple ways" and whether "it manifest[s] itself in the same way across the region and over time" (Kabutaulaka 2021).

Herr (2021) points to a legal aspect that at least theoretically could become a game changer in the current situation: Even though the Pacific Islands Forum was originally established in 1971, the cooperation in the Forum today is based on the 2000 Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. A few years later, in 2005, the member states of the Forum decided on an Agreement Establishing the Pacific Islands Forum that has been signed and ratified by the Micronesian states, but is not valid since Fiji has not yet ratified the agreement. Herr (2021) notes that "the regional turmoil may be seriously aggravated" if Fiji decided to move the 2005 agreement into force as this would make null and void the Micronesian notifications to leave the Forum. New notes on withdrawal from the Forum would need to

be submitted with new timeframes for the exit becoming effective. However, if the Pacific states manage to overcome their division before the exit of the Micronesian states moves into force, this legal aspect has the potential to provide a face-saving resolution of the current crisis. It would give the Micronesian states the chance to not withdraw their notes to quit the 2000 agreement, but to argue that all Pacific states jointly have been able to reform the system of regional cooperation and even advance regional cooperation.

Legacy of Dame Meg Taylor at risk after the election of Puna?

The Secretary General of the Forum used to have mostly symbolic and representative functions. This has changed to a certain degree over the past decades to "a more proactive, representational, and diplomatic, role in advocating for Pacific island country interests in a rapidly changing global context" (Fry 2021b). The outgoing Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor, who held the post since 2014, has "taken this broader interpretation of the role to a new and impressive level" (Fry 2021b) and was quite successful in implementing some reforms to strengthen the Pacific Islands Forum. Amongst others, Taylor was a very strong advocate of strengthening the inclusion of civil society in the Forum processes. Thereby, she addressed a long-existing criticism against the Forum and helped to increase transparency and accountability in the organization. It remains to be seen whether Puna will follow this path of reform. Having been Prime Minister for 10 years, there are some fears that he could – willingly or unconsciously – reverse some reforms and symbolizes a more traditional and state-cantered orientation of the organization. Moreover, since Puna faces charges in the Cook Islands for misconduct while being the country's Prime Minister, there is some risk that the court proceedings will obstruct administration or even damage the reputation of the Secretary General position.

Conclusion

The Micronesian exit from the Forum and the escalation of the conflict about the organization's future leadership are not isolated events. Rather they need to be understood in the context with other regional developments like the controversy about the USP revealing that there is not only a split between the Micronesian states and the rest of the region, but more profound manifold divisions between the Pacific states. The selection of the new Forum Secretary General was both a trigger for a crisis of regionalism and an indicator for many underlying divisions and soaring distrust between regional leaders that has been under the surface for some time.

Characterizing the decision about the Secretary General as a vote about US and Chinese influence in the Pacific is a misconstruction and oversimplification ignoring the manifold intra-regional motivations and dynamics that have triggered the escalation. Such characterizations are emblematic for the lack of interest of many institutions outside Oceania towards the Pacific region. The latter is far too often only perceived as a playing field for external powers, downgrading the PICs to mere objects. But the Pacific is not only relevant for its strategic importance to external powers like China or the US, rather there is the need to focus on the reasons why these actors perceive the Pacific as of strategic importance.

While Australia and New Zealand in fact have, once again, made some grave diplomatic mistakes, there is also some danger in statements from the region blaming the two countries for the crisis. This overshadows that there is a joint responsibility of the Pacific states, including Australia and New Zealand, but also the PICs, for the current impasse and its solution. To a certain degree, the current challenges in regionalism are rooted in historical dependencies and colonialism, especially since the classification of Oceania in three sub-regions as a result of colonialism has become relevant for Pacific politics. Despite the joint responsibility of all Pacific states, regional actors like Fiji have played a particularly unfortunate role in the development of the crisis, but also have to take a vital role in a possible solution.

While the division of the Pacific states may to a lower extent than many assume be the result of external actors' influence, its consequences may well have even more impacts on global politics than many assume. It is not just the rivalry between the US and China in the Pacific that is enforced by increasing dependency on bilateral relations, but also the loss of the PICs as a unified bloc in international politics. Especially, it may become even more challenging to agree on significant further steps to combat global climate change if the PICs are divided and therefore less insistent on urgent action than they have been in recent years. Consciously or not, the regional division matters for the region and matters for the world.

Howes and Sen (2021) have argued that "[w]hatever the precise reason or mix of reasons, the hard truth revealed by the SG selection and subsequent split is that member countries just don't take the Forum that seriously". There may be some truth in this analysis, but not necessarily because the PICs have a general disregard for regional cooperation or the Forum. The informality of regionalism may have comforted the PICs again, like in the past, to rather run away from the problems instead of looking for solutions even for sensitive issues. The COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of physical meetings between Pacific have contributed to the escalation. It reveals once more that while the 'Pacific Way' as a norm of regional diplomacy offers flexibility and traditional means of conflict resolution, it is not very flexible when the very format of Pacific regionalism is challenged. This is also a result of the high level of ambiguity in Pacific regional cooperation and politics with regularly changing regional alliances, and national interests often defined by individual Pacific leaders. While this appears to be a derogation, it also can become an advantage in finding flexible solutions for the current crisis.

There is much at stake for the Pacific states. The crisis is not just about the Forum, but about cooperation and the willingness to make compromises more generally. It requires but also offers the chance for much needed reforms of the regional cooperation system. The Pacific Island states should have an interest in continued cooperation and agree with Kevin Rudd (2021), when he says that the "Pacific Islands Forum is worth saving".

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Endnotes

[1)] Backed by the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to the three states and the invitation of the Marshallese president David Kabua as only PICs' representative to US President Joe Biden's Climate Change Summit in April 2021 that especially angered Fiji as self-proclaimed leader of the PICs.

[2)] With the exception of FSM that already mistakenly referred to the 2005 agreement in its note communicating its withdrawal.

Source: Pacific Islands Forum.

Figure 5: The former Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Dame Meg Taylor, attends a virtual meeting at the headquarters of the Forum Secretariat.

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BOOK REVIEW

Das Prachtboot. Wie Deutsche die Kunstschätze der Südsee raubten (Götz Aly) („The Splendid Boat: How Germans Stole the Art Treasures of the South Seas")

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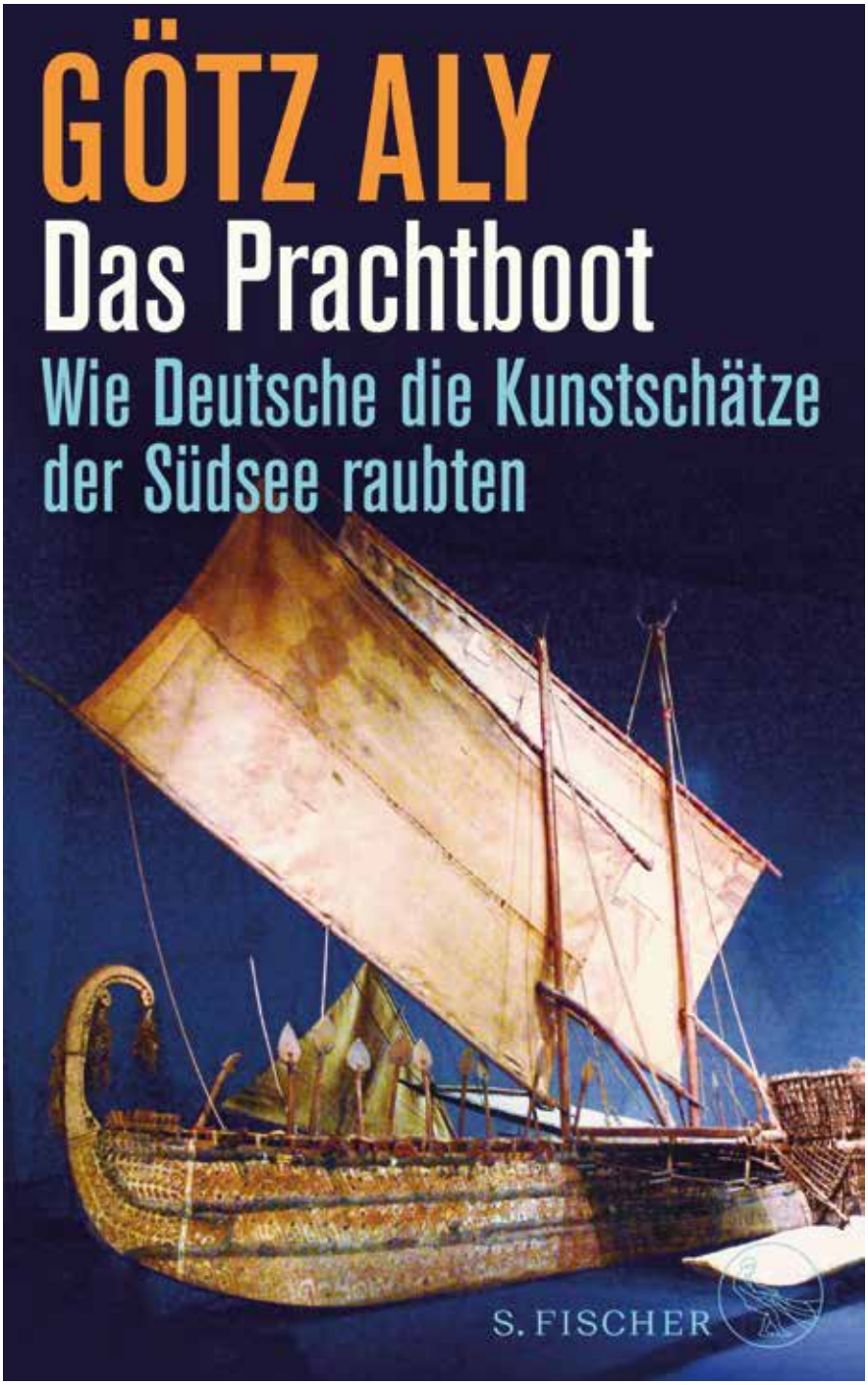
Can and should one even write a review of a book that has already been extensively reviewed in all major journals and magazines and that continues to excite people? You can - and must! The political scientist, historian and journalist Götz Aly, who comes from Heidelberg, has succeeded in putting his finger in a wound with his latest book and, due to its popularity, has given a highly sensitive discussion its own twist. The merit of his book is to point out the problematic conditions of the German colonial epoch in Oceania, as seen from today's perspective. But an unfortunate series of generalizations serves to undermine the value of this book as the basis for a factual discussion. First of all: Aly has deliberately ignored the most important scientific principle while at the same time insisting that his work is of a scientific nature: if a matter cannot be conclusively and clearly established, it must be addressed accordingly, and one should refrain from expressing conclusions that have a definitive character. From the available data, one can address possible strands of interpretation and weigh the pros and cons of the probability of individual aspects and formulate one's own assessments; but it must always be kept in mind that things could have been entirely different. In addition, a necessary distance from the research topic should prevent one from being too "drawn in" and then possibly no longer being able to credibly represent the desired objectivity.

Götz Aly fails to maintain this distance to the topic in many cases. Indeed, he claims to know what actually happened over a hundred years ago in the then young and historically short-lived German colony of German New Guinea. He does this by absolutizing indifferent and neutral formulations from his selectively consulted sources and prefers interpretations that support his own line of reasoning. This would be less problematic if he did not use his own conclusions to formulate allegations against historical-contemporary persons as well as current institutions and colleagues. My comments below on the book – as the opening sentence already suggests – are not generated in a vacuum, but inevitably take up the discussions that have arisen around the book, at least in those areas where they are important for the assessing its merits.

What is the book about? The installation of a large object, an approximate 15-metre-long outrigger boat from the island of Luf, one of the Hermit Islands in the Bismarck Archipelago (now part of Papua New Guinea), which came to Berlin in 1904 along with two masts and a square sail. Its inclusion in the newly opened Humboldt Forum in Berlin was a welcome occasion for Aly to further develop his theory that the vast majority of objects from German colonial times and kept in German museums are basically looted art. Starting from a specific object, whose exact acquisition history cannot be conclusively clarified, Aly launches a wide-ranging attack against those museums and institutions that store and exhibit objects from the German colonial era. This work cannot be viewed separately from a much broader discussion on several subject areas: the current debates about the present and future handling of objects acquired in colonial contexts, questionable object acquisition histories and restitution debates. One has to concede to Aly that his book proceeds with considerable precision, cleverly linking some of these points and connecting them to broader accusations.

Aly has personal connections to the location from which the richly orna-



Source: S. Fischer Publishing House.

Figure 1: Cover sheet of the book

mented boat originates: as a chaplain on a naval ship in the 1880s, his great-great-uncle Gottlob Johannes Aly witnessed the successive colonial subjugation of the islanders of the Bismarck Archipelago. The island of Siar in this archipelago was even given the name Aly.

After an introduction outlining his intentions, the author begins his book with a description of a massacre of the Luf people carried out by the German Navy around the turn of the year 1882/83. Subsequently, descriptions of other massacres follow one after another, for example one which took place on the island of Aly in 1897. Presumably, this is done to lead the reader towards the conclusions in the first third of the book, that "Germans" (as formulated several times in the book and in the subtitle), pillaging, robbing and massacring through their newly annexed areas, in addition to the human suffering this generated among local populations, also stole their cultural assets on a large scale. In particular, that Eduard Hernsheim, owner of the Hernsheim trading house, violently stole the boat in question a generation later; and in order to bridge the gap to the present, that the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK) stands accused of prominently exhibiting objects of questionable provenance. The starting point for this daring conclusion is Hernsheim's own written statement, which is open to interpretation, describing how the boat passed into his hands.

Aly enters into the history that led to the massacre of 1882, but rather superficially. A more detailed treatment of that history might not lend itself so readily to his line of argument, which positions Hernsheim as the "bad guy". In fact, the residents of Luf had executed a station trader from the Hernsheim trading house, and killed several station residents and destroyed buildings. We know of these and other details largely through the extensive corrections to Aly's claims introduced by Jakob Anderhandt who has questioned Aly's version of the events described and the role of Eduard Hernsheim in a review that will be published in November 2021. Anderhandt refutes several of Alys' key lines of argument. With the author's express permission, I take the liberty of quoting a short paragraph from his extensive review:

"Eduard Hernsheim even remained silent when at the end of the year two statements from eyewitnesses confirmed his suspicion that his schooner 'Elise', which had been lost since 1878, had also succumbed to an attack in the lagoon off Luf. In this case, the Hermit warriors had captured the ship, murdered the crew, plundered the cargo, dragged the schooner out to sea with their large boats and burned it there. Not even the captain's wife and her child, who was just a few months old, had been spared by them. Aly's book tells neither of this tragedy nor of Hernsheim's decision not to react, which contributed significantly to the de-escalation of the situation on the Hermit Islands." (Jakob Anderhandt; the full review will appear in November in the journal of the Association for Hamburg History 107, 2021).

None of the massacres should be excused in any way, and what happened during the punitive expeditions is unquestionably terrible, sad and to be rejected. However, these attacks were embedded within a context of violence and counterviolence, where one cannot always distinguish clearly between the "good" and "bad guys", despite the unequal power relations between Indigenous people and colonial occupants. Hernsheim was evidently known for his rather benevolent way of dealing with the Luf people, even if his motivations were largely economic. In any case, the Luf residents were not as peaceful and non-violent as Aly tries to portray them; in reality they were unpopular and feared by neighboring ethnic groups.

Anderhandt, who lives in Australia, is perhaps the most accomplished expert on the time periods, locations and people involved (especially Eduard Hernsheim). His detailed four-volume work on Eduard and Franz Hernsheim in the South Seas Library that Anderhandt founded is unrivaled. Even Götz Aly can't help praising him. But Aly's attitude is markedly different towards other specialist colleagues who have published material on these topics or on the Pacific region, works which Aly either deliberately ignores or refers to in mocking terms, such as the German historian Hermann Hiery, whose work he characterises as "Euphoric joy in the exotic and based on ethnologically draped voyeurism" (p. 20). In doing so, Aly does not mention that this particular publication of Hiery's is just the supplementary illustrated volume to a thick book "Die Deutsche Südsee 1884-1914, Ein Handbuch", which contains numerous and, in some cases, even very critical contributions from multiple perspectives dealing with the short but intensive period of German colonial activities in Oceania. The fact that Hiery, one of the most knowledgeable experts on the German colonial era in Oceania, has also promoted and published critical approaches for many years among others through his double series "Quellen und Forschungen zur Südsee", is completely ignored by Aly (in the list of references at the end from Aly's book, Hiery is totally missing, although mentioned in the text).

The suspicion arises that Aly is settling scores with the guild of German historians, with which he does not seem to be on good terms. If he can't get along with the German historians, then he could have turned to the works of their Anglophone colleagues and other sources, but even here, surprisingly, his use of relevant sources is limited. The repeated focus of his accusations is Hermann Parzinger, the President of the SPK (e.g. on p. 187), whose references to the given legal situation Aly finds "irritating". However, the actions of the SPK have so far been exclusively within the framework of the legal requirements, so that Mr. Parzinger cannot be accused of any procedural deficiencies, irregularities or errors. The suspicion arises that Aly is deliberately aiming to provoke a reaction from the reading public, towards which end he is prepared to include dramatizations and exaggerations that do not correspond to what we know of the reality of the events.

For example, on p. 73 in the book there is a picture of the dwellings of Luf residents, taken after the massacre. He describes these large, tall buildings, which are recognizable at first glance as having a very complex construction, as "emergency huts", which is almost frivolous. For Aly, however, there can and must no longer be a highly developed architecture on Luf, to support his argument that the few residents who survived the massacre of 1882 never recovered from it and, so to speak, sank to a simpler, improvised cultural level. However, comparisons with the contemporary architectural traditions of neighboring groups in the same epoch show similarities and clearly refute this assumption.

That Aly is not overly concerned with the residents of Luf is also clear from the fact that he denies them any agency of their own. They are glorified one-sidedly not only as peace-loving people, but also as suppressed in their potential to actively shape and act in that era. Serious specialist science knows about the complex, diverse relationship patterns that played out between colonizers and colonized in the field of tension between dependence, disenfranchisement, oppression and appropriation. In addition to resistance or tolerance, this also included various forms of cooperation and collaboration. Local people were sometimes beneficiaries of colonial developments and were able to profitably "sell" their knowledge to the colonial administrators, who often couldn't help but work with them. Regrettably, Aly maintains this paternalism, and objectification and incapacitation of the residents of Luf, in his book, though it is precisely what he criticizes in both contemporary authors and colonial actors.

The book is divided into twelve chapters with lurid titles such as "Cheating, stealing and looting" or "Devouring and showing contempt for human beings". His purpose here is evident: the tension and horror of any German colonial activity in Oceania must be maintained until the end. At the beginning, Aly addresses the opening of the

exhibition of the splendid boat in the Humboldt Forum. He returns to this occasion several times, especially in the last chapter of the book, and suggests that the boat should be returned. On the question of to whom exactly this would be returned, he is silent. One chapter is explicitly devoted to the extraordinarily artistic design of the outrigger boat, the hull of which is almost completely covered with ornaments. Contemporary photographs in the book give a good impression of this sea vessel, which has already been described by contemporary authors as the last of its kind. The core message of the book is based on the statement that the punitive expeditions first destroyed the large boats of the Luf people (there were also smaller ones), and that afterwards they were no longer able to use such boats due to their demographic decimation, with this one exception, which was forcibly torn from them and brought to Berlin. The fact that there was a whole generation between the massacre and the acquisition of the boat should give us pause for thought.

The chapters between this "bracket" of the boat address the subjects of punitive expeditions, the trade in ethnographic objects, the activities of traders, ethnologists, missionaries and colonial officials, as well as the practices of trade between colonizers and locals in what was then the colony of German New Guinea. Aly's book explicitly addresses the emergence of the subject of ethnology and its close interweaving with colonialism. In doing so, it provides valuable material for further debates on the history of science. Thirty-six images and a map illustrate the work, which is supplemented at the end by short biographies of the protagonists mentioned in the book, numerous endnotes, the specialist literature used and an index of proper names.

In his overall oeuvre, in which, among other things, aspects of the Holocaust were the subject of investigation, Götz Aly arrived at interesting new results, producing demanding and scientifically recognized works, for which he was rightly awarded. In this specific case, however, Aly has abandoned the quiet voice of a balanced, differentiating science in favour of a loud, pointed and exaggerated mode of representation. With this work he is - presumably quite consciously – embarking on a course of confrontation with the scientific community, presumably with an eye towards a lucrative marketing opportunity. In short, the book tends towards journalism, and is only partially scientific, even if it tries to claim that tag. It is aimed at the society of excitement, which is clearly recognizable today and not only on the boulevard, and serves it well. The publisher, S. Fischer, plays along by promising a "real Aly" in the blurb. Not surprisingly, the boulevard has largely praised the book without question, while the specialist scientists have almost universally rejected it.

In the meantime, further elements can be added to the story. In various interviews (e.g. Die Zeit Nr. 31, July 28, 2021), Aly insists that his point of view is the right one and tries to secure his position by accusing expert critics (who had shredded Aly's arguments on several grounds) of playing down colonialism (such as the ethnologist Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, who points out several contradictions in Aly's remarks; Die Zeit No. 29, July 14, 2021). These are unpleasant developments and one can only hope that the SPK will not allow itself to be influenced by such a work, but will instead focus on making the discussion more objective.

As a reviewer, I would like to conclude with a few personal words: I have read this book in full three times and will not hide the fact that the first time I read about the massacres, I was close to tears when I imagined what had happened to the residents of Luf (and others at the time). Aly's readable style managed to stir my emotion. The second time I read it, I proceeded analytically, consulted various specialist sources and began to be interested in the various reviews of the book. I noticed inconsistencies, exaggerations and the obscuring of particular aspects. The third time, the lecturing-accusatory style and the generalizations annoyed me; I put the book aside with an uncomfortable feeling at the end. So what is left besides the polarization triggered by the book and the fact that the book is selling well?

Finally, Götz Aly uses his book to refer to the work of the unjustly forgotten Siegfried Lichtenstaedter and his pamphlet "Kultur und Humanität", in which he described modern colonialism as early as 1897 with a keen eye for the dramatic consequences for the colonized and the double standards of the colonial powers. Alys is to be thanked for having made Lichtenstaedter's work accessible again under the title "Nilpferdpeitsche und Kultur" (Berlin 2021). This book is well worth reading and should be a must for anyone dealing with colonialism.

Acknowledgements

At this point, I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to Christopher Ballard for the profound translation free of charge of this book review.

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INTRODUCTION

The Pacific Network ("Pazifik-Netzwerk e.V.") is a non-profit association registered in Germany. It serves as a platform for people of various backgrounds from all over Germany and other German-speaking countries who have a joint interest in the Pacific Islands region, including scientists, professionals and people who used to live in the region.

The main objective of the Network is to inform about and raise awareness on the political, socio-economic, cultural and environmental situation in Pacific Island countries. Appreciation for the Pacific way of life and its cultural values with the aim to contribute to a better and peaceful mutual understanding is at the heart of our efforts.

With regular publications and newsletters, exhibitions, cultural presentations, seminars and conferences, the Network wants to enlarge public knowledge on Oceania. The Network also aims to offer expertise to decision-makers and media and to provide a platform for cultural exchange. Activities take place on regional, national and, in cooperation with our partners, international level. Issues on the agenda of the Network include e.g. climate change and sustainable development, resource extraction, deep sea mining, the legacy of nuclear testing in the Pacific and struggles for political independence, e.g. in West Papua.

The Network was founded in 1988 by several Pacific Islands solidarity groups in Germany. With currently more than 200 members, the association can be considered one of Germany's most important think tanks on Oceania. The Network is politically and religiously independent.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the German Pacific Network is possible both for individuals and for institutions. Membership can be requested on our homepage: www.pazifik-netzwerk.org/.

Annual fee for membership is 50€, and 20€ for students and retirees. All members quarterly receive the German-language news magazines "Pazifik-Aktuell" and "Pazifik-Rundbrief".

PACIFIC INFORMATION DESK AND OCEANIA-DIALOGUE

The Pacific Network was instrumental in establishing the Pacific Information Desk (Pazifik-Informationsstelle) and "Ozeanien-Dialog".

Based at "Mission EineWelt" in Neuendettelsau (Southern Germany) and funded by faith-based organizations and the Pacific Network, the *Pacific Information Desk* aims to inform the German-speaking public on important economic, social and environmental events in the Pacific region. It also publishes in close collaboration with its partners, including the Pacific Network, the German language news magazine "Pazifik-Aktuell" and the "Pazifik-Rundbrief". The "Ozeanien-Dialog" aims to strengthen Pacific voices in Europe. It collaborates with communities, non-governmental organizations and churches in Oceania on resource and climate justice as well as human rights in order to make sure that their interests are getting heard by policy-makers in Germany and Europe. The association is based in Hamburg.

Further information can be found at: www.pazifik-infostelle.org; www.ozeanien-dialog.de

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