

The Pacific Post

Oceania's voice on campus.

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Australia's domination games: not kinky at all.

Written by
Aimee Rogers

Australia's history is largely defined by colonialism, but its colonial role in the Pacific is little discussed, especially by Australians themselves. Australian administration of Pacific states, slavery practices and rampant environmental exploitation are all but absent from the cultural conversation. And yet, if these were practices of the past, why does the Pacific still remain reluctant to accept Australia as a regional development partner? The answers to this question can be found in the modernisation of these practices, and the realisation that Australian abuses of the Pacific's environment, labour and independence never went away.



KIA ORA , EVERYONE!

Luca Viscapi

For the Pacific Post’s inaugural first ever language segment (exciting right?), here are some simple greetings in the Pacific’s major languages. Feel free to use these with your friends to bring more Oceanic culture to campus!

Kia ora (pronounced kee-O-ra – the r is the same as in Spanish or Japanese) - This is the most common greeting in Te Reo Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand, used roughly in the same way as Hello!

G’day mate (pronounced yuckily) - This greeting comes from Australians attempting and failing to speak English.

We hope you try some of these out, e te whānau (family)!

PACIFIC PAVLOVA POLITICS: KIWIS VS KANGAROOS.

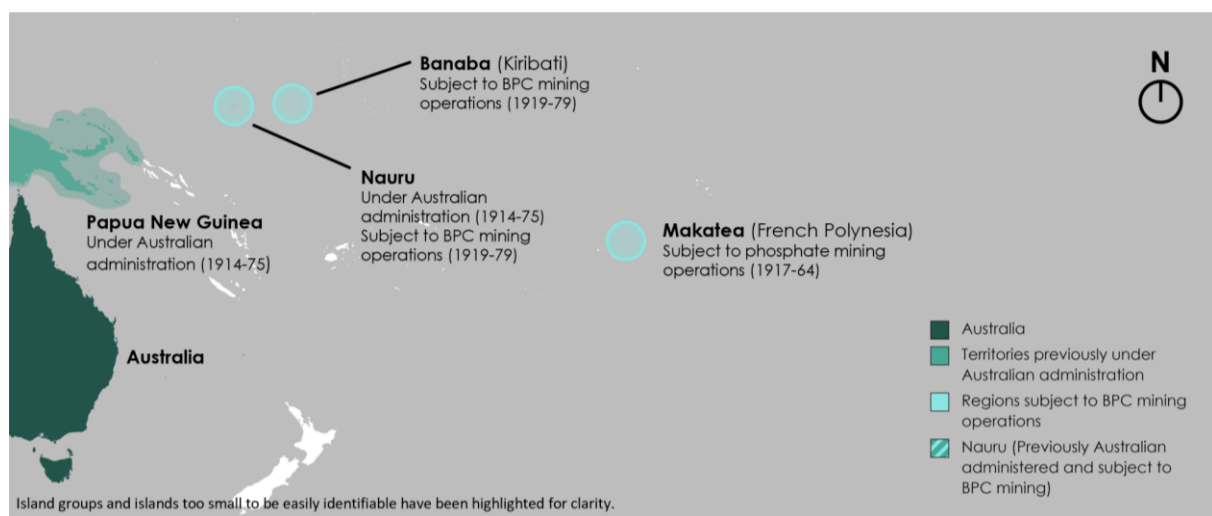
Connor Donaldson & Ryoma Suzuki

Few outside the Pacific have heard of the ‘pavlova wars’, but that does not make this century-long international conflict any less real.

Pavlova is a sweet and airy meringue cake, crisp and crunchy with a marshmallow centre, served with whipped cream and fresh fruit. But home chefs of both Australia and New Zealand claim their country invented it. So where did it really come from?

Pavlova takes its name from Anna Pavlova, a ballerina who became a celebrity in both countries in 1926. The earliest Australian claim asserts a hotel chef created the dish in 1935. However, research by leading pavlova experts shows a conspicuous absence of Australian pavlova up to 1940, whereas New Zealand recipes date back to 1929. So does that mean the case is closed?

Not exactly. Current scholarly opinion is that pavlova lacked a single, unique origin. Meringue cake recipes had been around long before the dish got its iconic name. But if you still want a final answer, I would like to remind you that it is no coincidence that the dessert is best served with kiwifruit.



Connor Donaldson

AUSTRALIA'S DOMINATION GAMES: NOT KINKY AT ALL.

Aimee Rogers

Australia’s history is largely defined by colonialism, but its colonial role in the Pacific is little discussed, especially by Australians themselves. Australian administration of Pacific states, slavery practices and rampant environmental exploitation are all but absent from the cultural conversation. And yet, if these were practices of the past, why does the Pacific still remain reluctant to accept Australia as a regional development partner? The answers to this question can be found in the modernisation of these practices, and the realisation that Australian abuses of the Pacific’s environment, labour and independence never went away.

‘Blackbirding’ is the term for the practice of abducting Pacific Islanders, specifically from the Solomon Islands, New Guinea and Melanesia, with the intent to bring them to Australia for contract labour. It was an extensively common practice in the late 18th and 19th centuries, with an estimate of over 60,000 islanders brought to Queensland alone. Blackbirding began to subside following the passing of the Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901, which served as a part of the larger ‘White Australia Policy’ aimed at reducing the presence of Pacific Islanders, and by 1906 a forcible deportation of all Islanders from Australia was implemented. While the Australian government has done little to acknowledge blackbirding since, its memory is alive and well and the Pacific communities it affected, and for some is being resurrected by the PALM scheme. The PALM scheme, or Pacific Australian Labour Mobility Scheme allows workers from nine Pacific islands and Timor-Leste to gain work visas in Australia for unskilled labour if local workers are unavailable. According to the the Guardian, since the beginning of Covid,

there have been 16 deaths linked to the scheme and extensive allegations of abuse, leading to workers being paid as little as AUD 300 (€180) for a week’s worth of 12-hour shifts, leading to criticism that PALM is little more than modernised blackbirding.

Additionally, another point of tension between Australia and the Pacific is climate action or lack thereof. As the third-largest exporter of fossil fuels globally, Australia has spent decades attempting to avoid substantial climate policy, continuously protecting its coal and gas industries. In fact, in November this year at a speech in London former Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, called climate change ‘ahistorical and utterly implausible’. From 2018-2022, the Morrison government continued to approve the expansion of coal mines and gas subsidies, placing an economic focus on a ‘gas-lead’ recovery post-covid, despite already failing to meet emissions-reduction targets. But Australian abuse of the environment at the cost of the Pacific Islands is hardly a new phenomenon. The Nauru Island Agreement, created in 1919 between the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, allowed for the administration of Nauru, and subsequent phosphate extraction to be run by the British Phosphate Commission (BPC). In 1923, and again in 1947, Australia was given trusteeship over Nauru, with the United Kingdom and New Zealand as co-trustees. The Australian government used this mandate to allow the BPC to strip-mine Nauru for phosphate, and expand into Banaba, an island of Kiribati, and parts of Tahiti in partnership with French syndicates.

By 1964, the island was so irrevocably damaged that it was thought to be uninhabitable until the 1990s and the Australian government proposed relocating the population to Curtis Island and bestowing them with Australian citizenship.

Nauru declined the offer and gained independence in 1966, but the consequences of phosphate mining live on, as today an estimated 80% of Nauru and Banaba's surfaces have been strip-mined.

According to Professor Ilan Kelman in the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, climate change in the Pacific is no longer a future threat. Environmental damage has already caused irrevocable changes to daily life, acting as a looming presence impacting Islanders' mental and physical health, food supplies, economic stability and cultural continuation. In response, Island states, including Kiribati, have proposed a 'Polluter Pays' policy that aims to have polluting nations bear the cost for their impact on the environment. Considering Australia's attitude towards climate response and presence in the region, it is not difficult to imagine who this policy may have been aimed at. Despite a more progressive administration under Albanese, Australia's long-standing refusal to combat climate change has already irrevocably damaged their relationship with the Pacific.

These tumultuous relationships have led to an increased Pacific interest in finding regional partnerships elsewhere, and China has proven more than willing to provide them. In 2022 China signed a loan agreement with Tonga to help cover the damages of natural disasters and a security deal with the Solomon Islands, with the intent to continue expanding Chinese influence in the Pacific. To say all hell broke loose in Canberra might be an understatement. For much of the past year, Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Penny

Wong has been focused on strengthening relationships with the Pacific Islands, attempting to paint the image of a new Australia that has 'heard' the complaints of the Pacific. But like most interactions between Australia and the Pacific, this approach only seems to further perpetuate past injustices. International Security Professor, John Blaxland, describes both Liberal and Labour governments as having a 'start-stop, feast or famine' view of Pacific relations, a view which has led to accusations that Australia feels an entitlement towards Pacific allegiance. The idea of Australian domination over the Pacific is baked into the founding identity of the nation itself. It has become an increasingly present narrative in scholastic research that Australian fear of German presence in West Papua in the 19th Century, and the national opinion that Britain had failed its duty by refusing to lay claim to the east, was a catalyst for federation. Though there are legitimate conversations to be had about Australia's security interests in the region, the invalidation of Pacific states' sovereignty that has occurred in the Australian media demonstrates that this mentality remains.

Australian Pacific policy is built on the colonial idea of Australia's right to dominance in the region, hence its response is reflective of a fear of losing that dominance, and an underlying belief that it's entitled to it. To change, Australia needs to acknowledge its colonial past to take active measures towards reconciliation that are no longer an act of good faith, but a necessity, if it wants to remain a major power in the Pacific moving forward.

ISLAND FEMINISM -AVANT L'HEURE

Olivia Coustance

If we think about the state of women's rights around the world in the middle ages spanning through the early modern era, we can easily say women were subjugated to men. There is, however, one exception to this generality: the Pacific islands. It would be wrong to transpose our patriarchal reasoning upon this region of the world, as many of its civilisations had strikingly modern cultural practices and outlooks on women's rights and gender identity — all of which succumbed at the dawn of western colonialism.

In the Pacific, instead, labour was distributed according to Whakapapa, a Māori term for ancestral descent (aha, one new random word in your wide range of vocabulary). Precolonial Hawaii had female monarchs as early as the 1300s, as well as illustrious, eminent female goddesses. Even more modern aspect of this society, both women and men could be enlisted in the army. However, this mana wahine (female power) was erased at the start of US colonisation, as the western institution of the heterosexual couple, nuclear family, domestic division of labour was imported.

Samoa traditionally recognises four genders: female, male, fa'afafine, and fa'afatama, the two latter being fluid categories moving between female and male. The same gender neutrality is embraced in the Māori language: while personal pronouns are gendered in most languages, the personal pronoun in Māori is 'ia' for both men and women, thus not establishing a binary division between the two sexes through language.

There is today a growing will to revive these pre-colonial beliefs: in 2013, Samoa amended its constitution to reserve 10% of parliament's seats for women. In New Zealand, women are strongly attached to the feminist cause, namely linked to the collective struggle led by women for female suffrage, exactly 130 years ago in 2023.

EL NIÑO: HE'S NOT AS CUTE AS HE SOUNDS.

Lilou Hardonnère

El Niño, less fun than it sounds, is a climate phenomenon of the South Pacific Ocean. During an El Niño Southern Oscillation cycle (ENSO), the Pacific jet stream (corridor of air current in the atmosphere) is pushed towards the south and east, lapping the Western coast of Southern America. This effect is completely natural in the ecosystem Earth (like the GHG effect) and is triggered by excessively warm sea temperatures. Hence, you can imagine that this doesn't bode well with climate change.

The ENSO is divided into three categories: a first cold, a second warm called La Niña and a third neutral. The first and second are usually the culprits of natural disasters we are tackling. Indeed, with climate change, phases one and two have gone from happening once every 20 years to once every 10 (data since 1900's).

Upon doing research, I found that the literature agreed there were very few studies of ENSO effects in Pacific island communities (Kelman, 2019), as opposed to their South American counterparts. However, we can still find obvious correlations between El Niño and the island's flood, fire and drought rates. For instance, in 2022, 70% of the 35 reported natural hazards were floods, counting over 700 casualties.

Due to a complex political context, mitigating these effects is often impossible in the Pacific, to the detriment of civilians.

KATE SHEPPARD: THE IT GIRL

Olivia Coustance

Her picture, posted on the 10 NZD banknote, acts as a testimony to her heritage. Kate Sheppard was raised in the UK and moved to New Zealand as a young adult, where she founded the local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. As part of her career, she was a columnist in the feminist rubric of the Prohibitionist, a pro-temperance paper.

She created the Union in the late 1880s, not long before the Beehive (NZ's Parliament's nickname) voted for women's the right to vote in 1893 (1919: women became eligible).

Playing off her influence in her column on the Prohibitionist, she galvanised public support for the feminist cause in New Zealand; definitely a pioneer!

THE TEAM

Ryoma Suzuki



Lilou HARDONNIÈRE

The Parisian-Kiwi President
Coucou, I'm Lilou, a Franco-Kiwi, perhaps more Parisian-Kiwi.



Luca VISCAPI

The Half-Blood Prince
Sup guys, ko Luca tōku ingoa, I'm a Franco-Kiwi who spent too much time on the marae.



Olivia COUSTANCE

The Franco-Chinese Kiwi
Kia ora! I'm Olivia and I'm a Kiwi-raised Franco-Chinese, so I'm practically Kiwi at heart. Like a true New Zealander, I love good music, hiking, and despicable weather.



Ryoma SUZUKI

The Aussie Rizzler (aka Ryzzoma)
G'day guys, I'm Ryoma. Ignore the deceiving Asian look and embrace the true blue Aussie at heart.



Connor DONALDSON

The Sciences Piste Gandalf
Kia ora, hailing from the distant highlands of New Zealand, my name is Connor and I'm ready to educate you all on the majesty of the whenua.



Aimee ROGERS

The Bogan Philosopher
Scam on, I'm Aimee. I'm just Australian, don't hold it against me.

ENDORPHINS FOR YOU EAR: POI E

Luca Viscapi

For the Pacific Post's inaugural MUSIC segment, we will be sharing with you the most iconic sounds the Moana (sea) has to offer.

Included below is New Zealand's most well-known waiata (traditional Māori song), Poi E (pronounced poi é).

Poi E was the first ever Māori song to reach number 1 on the New Zealand music billboards, signifying an unprecedented shift to social acceptance of indigenous music in the Land of the Long White Cloud (New Zealand).

Whakarongo atu nei! Chuck it a listen here!



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Thank You

I hope you enjoyed this first edition of The Pacific Post! Exploring linguistics, food, history, gender, arts and the environment, we're opening the door for you to explore a wonderful region of the world.

We all wanted to thank you for voting us as a student initiative earlier this semester, if you have this paper in your hands right now, it's thanks to your vote. We leave you with this to enjoy over your Winter break... Looking forward to more editions, articles, maps, music and more à la rentrée, see you then!

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