

The MELANESIAN WAY

Bernard Narokobi

Extract from Bernard Narokobi's *The Melanesian Way*

Chapter 1, published by the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies (Boroko) and the Institute of Pacific Studies (Suva), 1980 (revised 1983).

Back cover material: Bernard Narokobi is a challenging thinker who makes no apology for the controversies he stimulates in his aim to involve Melanesians, from the grass-roots to the elites, in the conscious shaping of their own identity, culture and nationhood. He begins from the assumption that his countrymen are in need of spiritual awakening to the truth of their own nature out of a legacy of foreign imposed values and institutions: "Time is long overdue for Papua New Guineans to wake up out of their Rip van Winkle sleep ... and take control of their destiny." Bernard Narokobi has served as a lawyer, international consultant, Supreme Court Judge, University lecturer and author. He is one of the most inspired intellectual leaders of the Pacific Today.

Comment by Alastair McIntosh to this web PDF: Bernard Narokobi is perhaps the greatest of the modern Melanesian philosophers. His thought is deeply rooted in the spirituality of place, which is why I have posted it to this website. His ideas have indirectly influenced our land reform and cultural regeneration process in Scotland. I knew him, though not very well, as a Board member of the South Pacific Appropriate Technology Foundation when I was its Financial Advisor 1984-86. I am deeply grateful for his teachings, a flavour of which is captured in the chapter of his book posted here. I believe that he is currently (2008) PNG's High Commissioner to New Zealand.

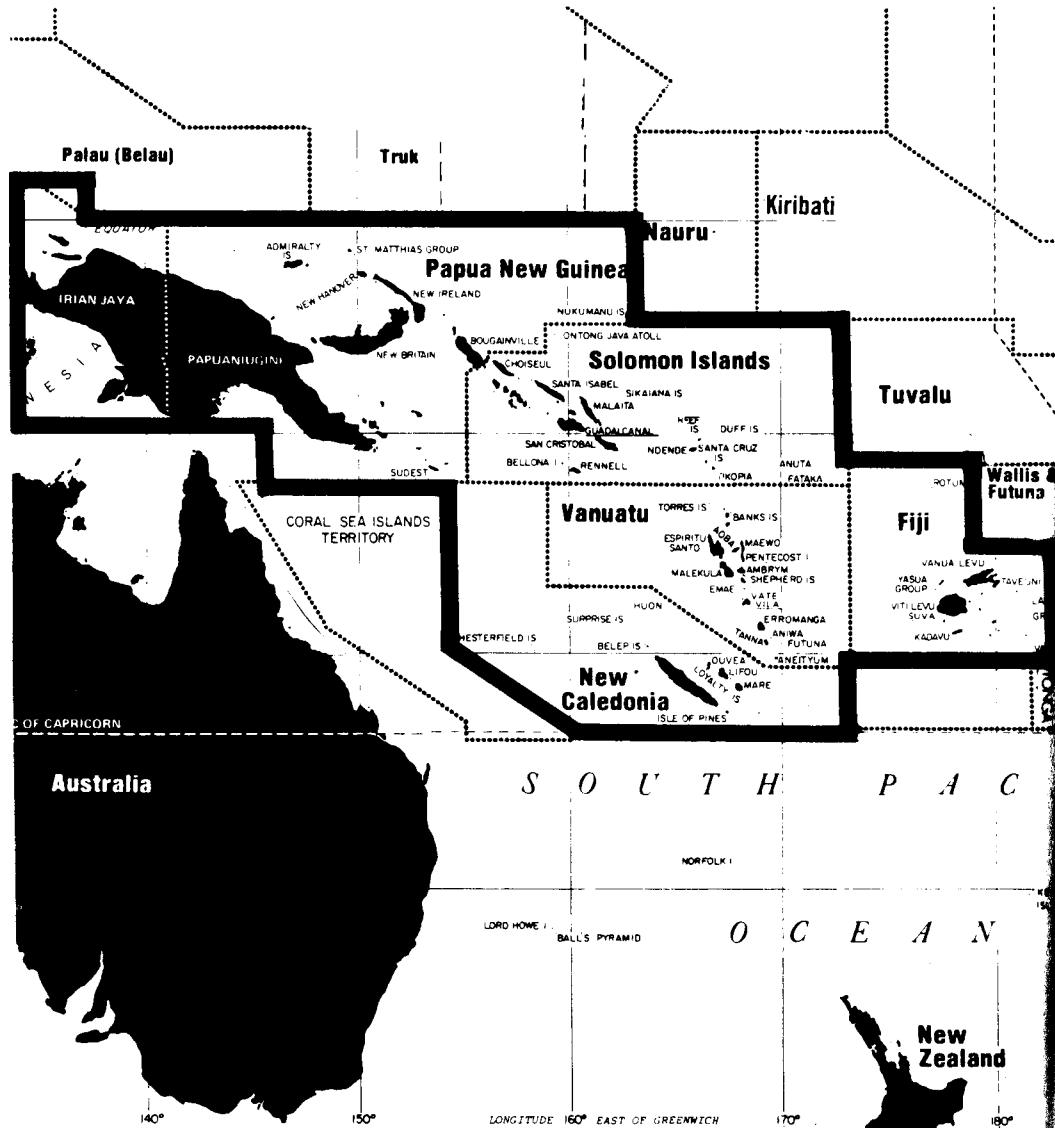
This website also contains material by the PNG philosopher Utula Samana – see www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/resources.htm, and I would invite comparison with the writings of Scottish Hebridean poet Iain Crichton Smith at the same link.

On the office wall at SPATF there was a quote from Bernard Narokobi and it is how I can best surmise his work. It said something like:

Welcome to the University.
The ancient, timeless, eternal
University of Melanesia.
The village
where courses are offered in living.

For source of this web PDF cite: www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/resources.htm

MELANESIA



Chapter 1

The Melanesian Way

1. Seeking Paths For Melanesia

Melanesian Voice is conceived as a forum for reflection on world and domestic events from the standpoint of Melanesians.

Melanesians managed to live on these islands for thousands of years before Europeans came into contact with them.

It is assumed therefore that Melanesians have had a civilisation with its cultures, values, knowledge and wisdoms which have guided them through the ages. These are their revealed truths.

Our history did not begin with contact with the Western explorers. Our civilisation did not start with the coming of the Christian missionaries. Because we have an ancient civilisation, it is important for us to give proper dignity and place to our history. We can only be ourselves if we accept who we are rather than denying our autonomy.

Our history did not have the binding effect of the written word. It did not have the wheel to travel distances and it did not have the naked power of the barrel of the gun. Accordingly, our influence was limited. Still, it was a lasting human experience.

But today, we have the gift of the written word and the privilege of the wheel. We can reflect on our ancient past and the modern life. We can have a responsibility to ourselves and to the world to bring to the world

the treasures of our civilisation. For far too long we have known ourselves through books written by others.

Melanesian Voice holds that from creation, every person of a human community, be it called a village or a nation, is endowed with a sense of good and bad by the Divine Source, however conceived or named. Accordingly, the inherent good or evil in Melanesia is, in some respects, unique to ourselves; while in others we share them with other communities the world over.

It is not intended to be syllogistically logical or consistent; it is meant to be reflective of human life which is experience filled with inconsistencies, contradictions, emotions, reason and intellect.

All manner of issues are open for reflection. Some of the subject matter will include religion, spirituality, culture, law, education, politics, economics, government, literature, business, history, sport and technology.

Melanesian Voice is conceived deliberately as a positive, creative and a constructive force. It is aimed at the good, the beautiful and the just. Consequently Melanesian Voice will be issue or principle orientated rather than being person directed. It will not dwell on the human shortcomings, except to point out the truth or to promote the positive, the healthy and the wholesome life.

It is hoped that through this forum, Melanesians will be honestly presented to Melanesians and others. Hopefully too, the Melanesians through the eyes of a Melanesian may see the world as it was, as it is and as it should be.

Melanesia consists of West PNG, Papua New Guinea and her outer islands, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji. Melanesia is inhabited by people who are of neither Asian nor European stock. At the same time we are not African or Polynesian, even though we have people of lighter complexion.

Melanesia has been invaded by a huge tidal wave from the West in the form of colonisation and Christianisation. Like any tidal wave, the West came mercilessly, with all the force and power, toppling over our earth, destroying our treasures, depositing some rich soil, but also leaving behind much rubbish.

This Western tidal wave has also set in motion chain reactions within ourselves and a thirst for a better future. Western influence has a negative and destructive aspect. Melanesian Voice also sees it as a wave that has helped to set free our creative forces. It is a wave whose moving ripples should be used as a living light for new future.

Whilst acknowledging our beautiful past along with its constraints, we also recognise the good in the new ways, and mindful too of the bad ways of today. With the freedom we have, we can make conscious decisions to opt for what is best in both worlds.

Today, we Melanesians stand at the cross roads. More than any people in the world, we can choose. We can choose to ape the West and the East

or we can choose to be ourselves in our philosophy, our life-styles and our whole beings.

Melanesian Voice is meant to be a force for truth. It is meant to give witness to the truth. Whereas, the final or the ultimate truth is the Divine Source, the syllogistical or the logical truth is dependent on the basic premises one adopts. The Melanesian Voice is meant to be a forum of Melanesian wisdom and values, based on Melanesian experience.

In some instances, Melanesian Voice will coincide with the Christian or other religious truths; in other instances it may coincide with logic, but it will not always be in line with both. It is both. It is not meant to coincide with these, because ours is a unique human experience.

Cut off from the rest of the world for many centuries, Melanesians nevertheless survived as a people. Now that we are finally connected with the world, we suddenly see ourselves through the world mirror.

Will we see our own true size images, or will we see ourselves in the images and the shadows of others?

Will we see ourselves in the long shadows of the dwindling light and the advanced darkness of the evening dusk, or will we see ourselves in the long and radiant rays of the rising sun? We can choose, if we will.

I see a new vision and a new hope for Melanesians. I see ourselves holding fast to the worthy customs of our people. I see Melanesians accepting principles of Christianity. I see Melanesians as a people who have patience and time for every person. I see Melanesians giving their highest regard to the spirituality of human dignity and a proper but insignificant role to the building up of status through materialism.

Everywhere in Melanesia, the people are yearning for the good life, the utopia. Spontaneous movements have emerged and will continue to emerge. These movements are called prophetic, syncretistic, political, religious, economic or civic, depending on the name caller. Still, every one of these movements is searching for the ideal way, in terms of human association.

These movements are seeking to know who we are in our new human situation. As in childbirth, we groan with pains and fears; then rejoice and give praise when the child finally arrives and we have to continue with the excitement of nurturing its growth.

Like the fruits of our mother earth, we, the potters and the weavers, can and should shape our own history. It is sincerely hoped that Melanesian Voice will bear witness to the new growth. Melanesian Voice will not seek to inflict evil on individuals nor to hide injustice behind the curtain of Melanesian ways. It will seek to promote the good as it sees it without fear.

2. *It's The 'Melanesian Way' But What Does It Mean?*

Since writing on the rich and beautiful ways of the Melanesians, many people have asked me what I mean by that expression and whether I am serious in what I say. Many have supported me, perhaps through spiritual unity and intuition, with little or no understanding of what it is all about.

It is now time to reflect more on Melanesian ways. My first response is — by their actions or omissions, you will know.

To me, the peaceful, non-violent, person to person way in which the Bougainville-Papua New Guinea Government conflict has been resolved is a proud tribute to the wisdom of Melanesians. That is a Melanesian way.

I, perhaps more than anyone else, am proud of the leaders on both sides who, with initial distrust, but some trust, have come together, talked together, developed and created trust in each other. This is a Melanesian way.

This is human development of the highest quality by Melanesians.

Our Melanesian ways stem from the unquestionable fact that we are an ancient people, born to liberty, born to ancient culture and civilisation.

We are not one year old, nor are we 200 years old. We are thousands of years old. We might be new to modern institutions, but we are not new to human persons' strengths and weaknesses.

We have a right and indeed a duty to call on the wisdoms of our ancestors. Collectively we possess the treasures of time tested and proven strengths. These we can use in times of stress and strain to liberate ourselves from oppressive circumstances, of whatever nature or magnitude.

As Melanesians, we are a spiritual people. Even before Christians came onto our shores, we felt and knew the forces of a source greater than ourselves. That was our divine power, the Melanesian way.

We can and should call on the strength of that source. We have a right to demand interpersonal dialogue with the forces at work to change us. We have a right to be here, not as carbon copies, but as authentic Melanesians.

From our spirituality, we had a communal vision of the cosmos. Our vision was not and still is not an artificially dichotomised and compartmentalised pragmatism of the secular society. Ours is a vision of totality, a vision of cosmic harmony.

Our vision sees the human person in his totality with the spirit world as well as the animal and the plant world. This human person is not absolute master of the universe but an important component in an interdependent world of the person with the animal, the plant and the spiritual. However he came to be, the Melanesian is.

Some people say that insistence on Melanesian ways is an attempt to have our people return to the gloomy days. I reject this argument.

First because the gloomy days have never been the gloom of our lot alone. Every civilisation, every culture, every race and community has its day of gloom. Indeed, every generation and every person has his bright days and his or her cloudy days. There is no sunshine without rain clouds!

Secondly, Melanesians were in fact moving together long before Western contact. One needs only reflect at the intricate trade links that extend across the island, the seas, the valleys, coastlines and the mountains to agree. If you don't agree, take a look at the Enga man who gets his shell from the Sepik man or the Mendi man who gets it from the Gulf man, and you will agree.

Thirdly, Melanesians are not and have never been slaves to their cultural practices, if they believed these were obstructing them. They liberate themselves by establishing new communities with new hopes and future.

Accordingly, sinking our vision in the past is not to be rooted in a dead and immobile past. To sink our roots in our past is to restore to ourselves our rightful dignity denied us by many whose purpose in Melanesia is to deny us our very existence as human beings.

We should spring from our cultural values to forge ahead in a world that is moving more and more towards a confused uniformity, monotony and insensitivity to the fine, subtle and sublime beauty of diversity. It is the simplistic imperialist who seeks uniformity as a technique to command obedience while portraying Papua New Guinea as a land of division, of disunity, of 700 languages and thousands of cultures. Some have even dared to call it a land of chaos. These are arguments of defeat and despair, betraying an inability to transcend one's cultural conditioning.

More and more as I travel throughout these rich and beautiful lands of ours, and listen to the old and young, I am convinced Melanesians are guided by a common cultural and spiritual unity. Though diverse in many cultural practices, including languages, still we are united, and are different from Asians or Europeans.

Our ways are not so varied and contradictory as many have claimed. Our unity springs not from the nation state, common currency, common banks, the police and the military. It is not even based on a common language. These facilitate unity, but they do not make it.

We are a united people because of our common vision. True enough, it has never been written, but has evolved over thousands of years.

The vision of Christ, for example, was not written by himself. Others wrote of it. Our vision and our ways too are unwritten. But the little efforts we make will go to unfolding its reality.

Those who will stop to reflect, and make their way through the alien-derived history and images of ourselves, will see that we are not a people of no consequence. Our history grew from our own solid shores.

We do not derive our civilisation, our laws and our values from others. It is because of what we are that we can embrace the 20th Century and beyond.

3. 'Insistence On Our Way Is Not Racist' In Defence Of The Melanesian Way

I am often asked, 'What is the Melanesian Way?' but I refuse to define the Melanesian way for a variety of reasons.

First, because the question is often asked by cynics and hypocrites and I refuse to be serious with such people. They don't ask in sincere search for knowledge, but in spiteful arrogance.

Secondly, because the Melanesian way is a total cosmic vision of life, it is not only futile but trite to attempt a definition of it.

Thirdly, to seek a definition of the Melanesian way is to seek to quantify and build the outer and the inner walls of the Melanesian way of life. This I refuse to do because it is like Moses asking the God of Israel to tell him who God was. God did not reveal Himself by a definition, but by a statement that I am who am.

I am not the author of the phrase 'Melanesian Way'. I do not even know the meaning of Melanesia, although I believe it comes from a European language and probably means negroid or black. It might even mean native or kanaka. Whatever its original meaning, Melanesia has come to include several South-West Pacific islands.

These are: East and West Papua New Guinea and their smaller islands, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanua Atu or New Hebrides and New Caledonia.

The popular view of Melanesia was that it consisted of thousands of hamlets, villages, clans and tribes which were closed to each other, and had no means of contact with each other beyond the hill, the valley, the river and the island, except through warfare. Our people are believed to be pagans who worship idols and live by uncontrolled sexual misconduct, who by nature are quarrelsome, belligerent, aggressive and warlike.

Most Western writers and observers, basing their views on ethnographic works, study Melanesia from one angle or another. If they are interested in inter-personal relations, they will almost inevitably describe sex roles, male domination, tense or hostile relations between male and female and child marriages and bride price.

If they are legally minded they will find an absence of courts, constables, codes and kings and conclude Melanesians lived by anarchy and lawlessness.

If they are scientifically minded they will find an absence of the wheel, gun powder, city skyscrapers, sprawling suspension bridges, and

quickly conclude that Melanesians had no civilisation, no technology, no mathematics and no science.

If they are men and women of letters they will find the absence of scrolls or written literature and quickly conclude that Melanesians lived without knowledge, learning or wisdom.

Missionaries come to Melanesia and find an absence of church buildings, mitres and rich priestly attire, ordained priests, hierarchy of bishops and angelic host of brothers, sisters, deacons, catechists and laity. They conclude Melanesians lived under an atmosphere of godlessness, or if they are more charitable, they say the people lived under a form of primordial religion called animism.

Over the centuries, Melanesians have come to see themselves as they are understood and written up by foreigners. Melanesians are walking in the shadows of their Western analysts, living under dreams and visions dreamt and seen by Westerners.

For over one hundred years, we have been subjected to microscopic study by Western scientists, scholars, and experts only to emerge second rate. Whatever our dreams, our visions, our histories, and our values, we were told our history began when Captain Moresby sailed into our shores or when Germans decided to make plantations out of our land.

Every experience of our long history was anthropology or archaeology for drop-out Western scholars seeking the promised land in our environment. To the extent that they fall fascinated, they over-idealise Melanesia. To the extent that they despise Melanesia, they disregard its inherent virtues.

Having described what is the Melanesian way, I wish now to briefly offer my reasons for insisting on the inward study of the Melanesian way, in order to develop our true identity.

For thousands of years we had no written word. In spite of this 'impediment', our people guarded with their lives great truths and virtues and passed them from father to son, and mother to daughter.

As a result, while the Western world was busy exploring, exploiting and conquering, we Melanesians went on with the business of life and living. Without the benefit of the wheel or the gun powder we continued to travel and make links with the peoples of distant islands and mountains.

With the benefit of the written word, I believe we must without delay establish our own authentic philosophy, our authentic doctrines, theologies, jurisprudence, sociology, psychology, medicine, education, politics, economics, architecture and so on.

This is a legitimate undertaking for it establishes our human identity beside every culture and civilisation. It is unnecessary for us to be perfect Englishmen or Americans if we know who we are.

Unless we succeed in establishing a philosophical base, founded on our ancient virtues, we stand to perish as a people of unique quality, character and dynamism.

We Melanesians now stand on the summit of Mt. Wilhem. We can look across the valleys and isles of civilisations. We can see ruins of many civilisations. We can see the deterioration of human spirit in many lands. We can also see the beauty and the strengths of civilisations across the globe. We can see the deposited debris of the tidal wave on our shores.

The task before us is whether we can be free to choose. Can we choose a path that will give us a Melanesian identity, faith and dignity?

Racism Is

One of the most effective ways of dismissing an argument which pricks our conscience is to label it racist, or emotional, or irrational.

One of the ways to discredit a person or his views is to call that person or his views racist. Facts are given a light which the author never intends. To prove a person wrong is consistent with pursuit of knowledge. But to misunderstand or refuse to understand a person, is a negation of truth.

In the course of responses to several issues of Melanesian Voice, the author has been labelled a racist. Nothing could be more pompous, arrogant and self-righteous than to read what one wants to read from an article and label it racist.

It is the ultimate in racism for non-Melanesians to define the values in society and expect us Melanesians to conform to them.

I make no judgment on individuals who benefit from, or suffer at the hands of, a wage system based not on the equal worth, equal dignity and equal values of the individuals who enjoy the same qualifications and contribute quantitatively and qualitatively to the growth of our nation.

I make no judgment on those who somehow believe their skin color or nationality gives them more rights to God's goods and services produced from human hands.

However, I do ask basic questions. What makes someone take for granted that his children are entitled to a more expensive education system than mine? Who gives him the right to consume more than I?

The same questions must now be put to Melanesians who are unwilling to share. Nothing could be more racist than to accept that one race is worth more than the other. It is pure racism to argue that Melanesians need less because they have always had less.

It is pure paternalism to believe one is here to teach and educate poor and ignorant Melanesians.

The true motive of our 'helpers' must be questioned. Some certainly end up helping themselves more than they help us. The truth is that benefits are mutual. The helper helps the helped and the latter helps the former to become human, more just and more civilised. True helpers are servants who will readily acknowledge that those who do more should

get more than those who do little or nothing, but realizing that it may not be the fault of the latter that he is less than what he could be.

Promoting Melanesian identity is not racist. It is not even unchristian. It is a call to develop our talents, qualities and virtues as people.

The fact that what we are seeking to promote is found elsewhere gives others no greater right to impose their systems on us. In fact the contrary should be the case. Because we have some beautiful values, outsiders should stop ramming their values and systems down our throats under the guise of 'technology', 'modernism', 'development', or 'progress'.

It is quite apparent to me that racism is on the increase in PNG. In recent months, I have experienced several discriminating practices based on race. At one airline counter I was in front offering my ticket to be cleared. I was being attended to by a non-Melanesian. Then, out of nowhere, a non-Melanesian pushed his way up into the front. He offered his ticket. Instinctively, the non-Melanesian attendant quickly pushed aside my ticket and attended to his wantok.

The entire system of government and religion in PNG, is based on racism — the white superiority mentality. Take the education system for example. Many Western educationists teach in PNG on the basis that Papua New Guineans possess inferior intellects. The social values the education system propagates are entirely foreign. Many little churches use God and Jesus as a way to blackmail Melanesian souls. Take the legal system as another example. The legal system in PNG is based on the supposition that the English rule of law, with all its virtues and prejudices enshrined, is superior.

This is pure racism. It is not my racism. I am merely exposing the ugly mask of racism practised in Melanesia. PNG must develop its own institutions to meet its changing needs. To cling on to foreign systems as if they are divinely conceived and given birth to is not only racist but inhuman, for it denies us our right to be creative, to make mistakes and to learn from these mistakes.

Experts are like children. They expect Papua New Guineans to play within the perimeters they draw for us. If we do not measure up to their expectations, we are inferior. This is pure racism, subtle and unwitting though it might be.

At various inter-departmental meetings I have had the privilege to attend, I am continually saddened by the way in which technologists, teachers and experts have been able to impose institutions and systems on PNG just because Papua New Guineans have not been alert to their calculations. They present arguments of 'economy', of 'technology', of 'the boss supports it', to flatten Papua New Guineans whose almost unanimous views are against institutions or systems being proposed.

In spite of our intergroup fights, it must be realised that Melanesian societies are non-exploitative, non-acquisitive and non-colonialist. It is true that one tribe or perhaps more might have practised slavery and

colonialism but on the whole our societies did not achieve the pinnacle of their civilisation by subduing other races or by ruling the waves.

The real motive of the do-gooders must be questioned. Any argument that asserting Melanesian identity is racist is pure rhetoric inspired by racist motives.

If Papua New Guineans are really equal to others and are making a much greater contribution, then why shouldn't they get more than outsiders? Similarly, outsiders who are contributing more than Papua New Guineans should get more. It is the value of work output that must count, not race.

Papua New Guineans need to be more assertive, not more arrogant, if they are going to inherit the wealth of this nation. They are far too passive and too shy for their own good. My soul weeps when I see Melanesians being pushed about like rootless leaves in the air. Papua New Guineans need to stand up and be counted.

It is no wonder that some of the most racist business houses in PNG are making more profits now than ever before, outsiders are ripping off the riches of this country. While we are being captivated and enchanted by the aura of political power, our feet, and our very souls, are being swept away. Half of Melanesia has been swept away by Asians. If the other half is not careful, it too will be swept away.

We never had to struggle for our political identity. We never had to assert our cultural integrity. We had very few, if any, political martyrs for what is best for our people. Praise be to our colonisers for their far-sightedness. Praise be to our colonisers for their liberal-mindedness. Praise be to our metropolitan masters for their vision to free us from their bondage.

In fact, nothing has changed. Papua New Guineans are entering much greater bondage now than ever before. The master-servant relationships continue. There are far too many house boys whose status and dignity is being ignored by our own people in power and authority. There are far too many Papua New Guineans being siphoned into business ventures in which they are nothing more than legal rubber stamps for expatriate businesses. Far too many outside people are meeting the requirements of the law to undertake activities, whether they are businesses or religions, at a great cost to our people. Therefore, I say to all those who claim to know what is best for PNG that I certainly will not be intimidated by their racist allegations.

Papua New Guineans must unite and speak up to establish their own history. Created equal, we are of equal worth. We should be treated equally. Created in the image of the creator, we are co-makers with the Creator of our own histories. We Melanesians work with God to build our earth. On earth we will inherit. It is work of an ungodly nature to have us echo the sounds of those who made history in Europe or elsewhere, people now long dead and gone from this, our mother earth.

4. *Working It All Out Together, The Melanesian Way* *Live Well, Love Well — And Die Happy*

In a Melanesian village, everyone is related to everyone else. You're either a brother, an uncle, a grandfather, a son, a daughter, a mother, or a relative by marriage. One of the most essential elements of Melanesian society is its close human relations. Closeness does create tensions which erupt. But that is like waves that splash and subside. There is never any confusion who one can or cannot marry, even though the forbidden fruits may be eaten in some instances. Giving and taking is an integral part of Melanesian society. Co-operation and mutual support, especially in times of need and crisis, are part of our living experience. Confrontation and competition are kept to a minimum.

A Melanesian village is a vital and dynamic human institution. It is not the shapeless, impersonal, juristic layout of buildings a modern suburban city is. A village is a cultural unit, an organ of civilisation, technology, agriculture and enterprise. It's like living among a young family that's busy growing. All its members apply their talents at their own pace, without promises or inducements of higher pay, overseas travel or promotion. People work because it is right to work, and eat because it is pleasurable to eat. The only promotion our people expect is to be recognised for their generosity and helpfulness, and to be appreciated. The lazy man is never appreciated. The only inducement they will accept is a promise to be buried with honor and dignity — when they pass through time.

Often I sit in my office at Waigani with books and papers all around me and wonder what it's all about. A long time ago, our people discovered the secret of life — live well, love well, have something good for every person and die a happy death. By blindly following the West we have become estranged and alienated from each other. Personal human relationships are being sacrificed for professional titles. It is tragic that political parties are further dividing our people. It saddens me to see people stand on their offices or titles and refuse to deal with other people except as bosses or employers.

In villages, whenever a person needs food, firewood, leaves, water or help building a house, they will freely ask for help from relatives.

Of course not all help is readily given. But to those who share, help is never denied them. It often depends on whether the person seeking help has given it in the past. Before a young man becomes accepted as an adult, he will want to build a house. All he has to do is make his wishes known, clear the site, cut the first few posts and all his relatives will come to his aid. They will cut posts and saplings, and collect kunai grass or sago leaves and prongs for blinds or walls. It is up to the young man and his family to provide food and drink for the workers.

Work is done not to earn promotion (except in the sense of achievement) but to fulfil a need, be it artistic or purely functional.

Members of different families and clans will contribute to the work either to discharge an obligation or to create new obligations, or to give honor to an endeared personal relationship. To work for others is part of Melanesian spirit of caring for others. If we could realise this we would know the deep foundation on which many of our government policies could take off.

We often talk of self-reliance as if it was some great political ideology we have to learn from China or Tanzania. But in fact, the spirit of self-reliance has always been in Melanesia.

We are often preached at by missionaries to be charitable and to give and not to count the cost. We are often urged by service organisations to engage in community work as if we have never known community service in our villages. In saying this I do not deny that the village 'closeness' is no longer true for towns and cities. Wantoks don't live close to each other any more or have the time and resources to help each other. There is definitely a need for organisations like St. Vincent de Paul, Red Cross, the Port Moresby Development Group and Apex. I cast no aspersions on the sincerity of their members and am a member myself of some of these. I often wonder, however, whether some of these organisations exist as elite clubs to propagate themselves and to justify many smart business deals and activities that cannot measure up to either Christian or Melanesian standards of care and concern for one's fellow.

We must be careful not to destroy the Melanesian values of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others, or make beggars and dependants out of our people by good works and deeds. Let me emphasise this point. I am not against charity organisations. There is certainly a place for charity organisations like St. Vincent de Paul in Port Moresby where for whatever reasons tribal and "wantok" links have broken down, and a need for government or publicly financed institutions for the aged, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame and the disabled throughout Melanesia. Relatives and "wantoks" can no longer look after their physically handicapped without help, and need the support of all of us.

Too often we join charity organisations for wrong reasons. Our foreign brothers and sisters seem to undertake charity or welfare work to justify their financially advantageous positions. Papua New Guineans are often made to feel that volunteer service is something imported to our shores and planted in our hearts. How wrong this attitude is. It is nothing more than "Eurocentricity". Many Papua New Guineans support their aged parents, infant school relatives, widowed parents, and divorced sisters without ever asking for financial support from the Government, the Church, private enterprises or charity organisations. They do this because tradition dictates it.

Income tax laws hardly help Papua New Guineans because they are devised for the foreign so-called nuclear family. Often a Papua New Guinean will support ten or more close relatives besides his own immediate family of five or more, and yet our income tax laws only

entitle a taxpayer to claim four dependants for up to a sum of K250. The State does not seem to realise that the relatives and wantoks that I, as a taxpayer, support are the same people the State has been established to serve. These legal limitations upon income tax claims disregard my personal support and contributions to my fellow citizens who also happen to be my relatives.

I realise income tax laws have only been amended recently to make them simpler to suit administrative convenience. However, I believe any law which has a profound impact on the cultural values of our people deserves public scrutiny, comment and opinion before it is given to Parliament. Our people are not sufficiently politically aware to make any significant impact on the bureaucratic control of the Parliament and other government institutions.

5. It's The Truth As The Artist Sees It That Counts I'm Writing To Please No One.

I have no intention whatsoever to look over my shoulders whenever I write or utter a word. Accordingly I have no intention to reply to every criticism that is levelled at me personally or at the thought, content or the literary merit of my writing. In any case, it is good to have opposing views, because out of all that will emerge Melanesian identity. At the same time, I would like to express a word of thanks to those like William Kuamin and Kumalau Tawali, who have been able to grasp the true intentions of this series of articles.

Let me state at the outset that as an artist writer, I write to create a new society, based on the new and the old. That is the way, I see my role at this time. An artist, whether a painter, a sculptor, a poet, a playwright, a musician or a novelist, works to create vision, new hope, new life, unconcerned to please anyone except the sense of beauty, proportion, harmony and life as seen through his or her own human eyes. A wood carver must be free to carve the soul-image he sees, whether it is of his spirit ancestor or a superior deity. His image has little, if anything, to do with the changing faces of real human beings. But it is not far off either. An artist writer is often captivated by an idea, a vision.

He is totally absorbed in that vision which takes him away from the earthly frailties of our human lot. He tries, as far as words will allow, to paint a picture of a life that is at once ideal at once real, almost too far away to be attainable.

For a creative writer, facts are the media he weaves into images that can be devastating, discomforting to some and yet inspiring, thought-provoking to others. What is crucial is that the artist must not be unduly concerned with the reputation his writing will bring on himself. He must be completely honest to his vision, his hopes, his despairs, his longings and his sense of expectations. An interpretative writer must write to

please no one, except his informed and well formed conscience. Facts, in their detailed nature, may not always be minutely accurate however he is concerned to interpret themes of life at general levels of abstraction where facts are elevated to speak with general application.

The author is not concerned to document facts for storage in a lifeless museum, nor with documents to be stored away in archives. He is not interested in counting his blessings, whether conferred upon him by white or black men, nor in counting the cents this company or that Government has given to his people or to himself. The writer is concerned to discern the threads of life that emerge as a result of collective or individual human activity. What was Papua New Guinea? What is happening to PNG? Where are we going? Is there merit in our Melanesian life style? Can we learn anything from Eastern and Western history?

When an artist paints a tranquil scene, his masterly use of paint and brush brings to life happy, sad, angry, beautiful or joyous memories. The scene of the artist's creation is not real in that you couldn't find the precise details anywhere on the ground. Nevertheless, it is a scene that is real. He may, of course, choose to paint the positive or the negative aspects of the human experience. The cameraman catches a view. The lenses open to admit a certain amount of light which is involved in chemical reactions which eventually produce an image. It is the same with the creative writer.

The writer is concentrating his vision on an image of society. Whether what the writer describes accords with what is actually on the ground in the last detail is quite secondary to the main image. The writer selects certain data to shape it into an idea. The vision portrayed may disappoint, anger, annoy or it may motivate, satisfy or please the reader. It may even confuse the reader. Every reader will react differently to a piece of writing. Every reaction is, of course, legitimate, whether it is justified or not in the writer's opinion.

Several correspondents have sought to discredit Melanesian Voice by calling its views "communistic", "racist", "ungrateful", "shameful", "embarrassing", and so on. As far as the author of Melanesian Voice is concerned, his views are authentic images of a Melanesia in search of a new social order, not just for Melanesia, but for the human race. I may be called "racist" however I know too well who practises racism in the world today. It is useless calling Melanesian Voice communistic because the spiritual dimension is an inherent part of Melanesian make up and no authentic Melanesian can be a Communist of the Marxist-Leninist order, or accept any premise of Godlessness.

Gratitude cannot be forced out of people by giving of aid. Foreign aid, if given with right motive and used wisely is no more than sharing the resources of the world among its citizens. Foreign corporations operating in PNG pay taxes because our law forces them to pay taxes. They would sooner not bother with Melanesian sharing. They are in PNG

to make profit, not share resources. Payment of taxes is the minimum the public can expect of a person or a corporation. It is hardly charity and certainly not generosity. There is little merit in calling Melanesian Voice "shameful" or "embarrassing" because there is nothing to be ashamed of or to be embarrassed about. On the contrary, we have every reason to be proud of our ancient heritage and to shout from the moutaintops for all the world to hear, our rich values. There is no other place in the world that is like Melanesia.

There are those who are so ill-informed, simplistic and narrow minded as to believe Melanesians have the choice between the so-called "primitive" past of our ancestors and the "civilised and enlightened" present of Western civilisation. The choice is in fact more complex than this. The secret to that choice lies in the dual pillars of our Constitution. These pillars are our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now, enhanced by selected technology. It is my hope that we would not blindly follow the West, nor be victims to technology and scientific knowledge. These belong to human kind. They are not racial or national. It is the same with music and good writing. These are physically located in time, place and people, but in their use and enjoyment, they belong to all. Thus it is with Melanesian virtues.

It is necessary to articulate Melanesian ways in Melanesian cosmic vision. The fact that this vision might also be shared by other societies does not negate the right and the duty of Melanesians to espouse their vision as they see it. When we find our wisdoms and nurture them, they will surely enhance humanity, which is incomplete without us. No foreigner must control our resources, intellectual, human, material or cultural, no matter how charitable he is. Melanesians, we must always be.