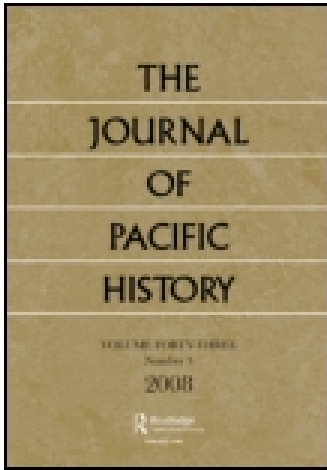


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Pacific History — The Long View

This forum has opened up several exciting areas for further debate, not just in the content we teach in Pacific History courses, but in how we engage with our communities, how we tap into student experiences to enrich lectures and tutorials and, most significantly, how we might address the decline in Pacific History enrolments in some university sectors. Stewart Firth and Teresia Teaiwa both raised the question of whether there is 'foundational' subject matter in Pacific History and Pacific Studies, and Teaiwa asked why so little attention has been paid to how to teach Pacific History and Pacific Studies at the tertiary level. To respond to this agenda, I offer a long view, having now taught Pacific History for 37 years in Victoria, Queensland, Papua New Guinea and, currently, in Fiji at the University of the South Pacific (USP). From my teaching at the University of Papua New Guinea and USP, I would like to focus on the need to link Pacific History with what the forum's editor, Paul D'Arcy, calls the 'wider research and teaching agenda'¹ and to emphasise the benefits of metropolitan students engaging in fieldwork through home-stays in the islands, and the yet unexplored potential of undergraduates in islands-based universities visiting other institutions and neighbouring and distant nations and territories. I begin with a few additional comments on the content of the Pacific History that we teach, which the editor and the contributors were unable to decide was synonymous with, or not, the field called Pacific Studies.²

I began teaching a course labelled Pacific History in 1973 at a primary teacher training college at Frankston in Victoria, which had just become a college of advanced education and was eventually a part of Monash University's expanded campus. As I glance over the faded course outlines from that period, I am embarrassed by the Eurocentric, chronological, imperial narrative that I delivered under the pretext that it was Pacific History. I had little background in Pacific History apart from two years military service as a 'Nasho' living in Wewak in the then TPNG³ and, on my return to Australia, an honours and master's thesis from Monash on the Polynesia Company and Australian relations with Fiji. I taught from the few histories then available: C.H. Grattan's two volumes, Douglas Oliver's 1951 general history, the edited collections of essays in *Pacific Islands Portraits* and a couple of classics, including Alan Moorehead's *Fatal Impact*, Gavin Souter's *New Guinea: the last unknown* and John Legge's *Britain in Fiji*.⁴

¹ Paul D'Arcy, 'Introduction: diverse approaches for diverse audiences', *Journal of Pacific History*, 46:2 (2011), 197–206.

² A chapter in 2010 by Teresia Teaiwa on Pacific Studies surveys this debate and provides the best summary; Teresia Teaiwa, 'For and before an Asia Pacific Studies agenda? Specifying Pacific Studies', in Terence Wesley Smith and Jon Goss (eds), *Remaking Area Studies: teaching and learning across Asia and the Pacific* (Honolulu 2010), 110–24. I thank Frank Thomas for reminding me about this important essay.

³ 'Nasho' stands for Australian National Serviceman; TPNG for the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

⁴ C.H. Grattan, *The United States and the Southwest Pacific* (Melbourne 1961); C.H. Grattan, *The Southwest Pacific to 1900: a modern history: Australia, New Zealand, the islands, Antarctica* (Ann Arbor 1963); Douglas L. Oliver, *The Pacific Islands* (Cambridge, MA 1951); J.W. Davidson and D. Scarr (eds), *Pacific Islands Portraits* (Canberra 1973); D. Scarr (ed.), *More Pacific Islands Portraits* (Canberra 1979); A. Moorehead, *The Fatal Impact* (London 1966); G. Souter, *New Guinea: the last unknown* (Sydney 1963); J.D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji, 1858–1880* (London 1958). John Legge was Professor of History at Monash then, and my thesis supervisor, although he had by this time moved on to become a world expert in Indonesian history.

The *Journal of Pacific History* (*JPH*) had been running for seven years by then, and it quickly became a tattered and heavily underlined source for the next week's lectures. Kerry Howe's seminal article on 'new directions or monograph myopia', when it came out in 1979, was challenge to my arrangement of topics, but little debate followed his lead.⁵ The documentary series from Film Australia, *The Human Face of the Pacific*⁶ provided the visual supplement to lectures that tended to finish well before independence was gained, and I cannot recall being overly aware of the decolonisation processes then going on in the Pacific. My version of Pacific History clearly ended around 1900, and did not encompass the dynamic histories of the contemporary era. The regular new volumes from Cambridge, Oxford and ANU Press were quickly absorbed, but little of the 'island-centred' approach being espoused in Canberra reached out to the provinces.

By the end of the 1970s, my courses had changed dramatically away from year-long chronological narratives of European traders and naval captains, scientific expeditions, missions and port towns. Courses became thematic, and focused on Islander responses — although one course title was still an embarrassing 'Culture contact'.⁷ I had also finally acknowledged what Ian Campbell had noted in his history of the region, that more had happened in the Pacific after 1945 than in the previous 400 years.⁸ A course on the 'Pacific since 1945' and later 'Colonialism and independence' became my new passion, motivated by events in the region, as noted by Stewart Firth in this forum, and dictated by a surge in edited collections of essays and more journals.⁹ The teaching was enthusiastic, but not particularly well informed by the latest historiography and pedagogy. I was lucky to have started lecturing in the MACOS (Man a Course of Study) era, a social studies approach for schools which emphasised student-centred learning and student decision-making based on primary evidence and experience. It became known as the 'inquiry' method, and with regular coffee breaks with colleagues in the college's curriculum strand, the lectures and tutorials certainly reflected the move away from the teacher-expert at the front approach. Teaiwa notes that she taught for 12 years before 'checking in' on a 'how-to' course in tertiary teaching, and probably all our colleagues had similarly drifted in their teaching.¹⁰ My salvation was that I had come from a primary and secondary teaching background, and that certainly shaped my lecturer-student classroom environment. My teaching also benefited from annual fieldwork trips with students at the end of the year, which provided a large collection of colour slides useful for lectures, and numerous anecdotes that demonstrated to the next year's class the lecturer's familiarity with the islands. These extended home-stay trips to Nauru, Kiribati, Guam, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Samoa and American Samoa provided an immersion experience and, although not for credit, certainly led to increased enrolments in the

⁵ Kerry Howe, 'Pacific Islands history in the 1980s: new directions or monograph myopia', *Pacific Studies*, 3:1 (1979), 81–90.

⁶ *The Human Face of the Pacific*, series of six documentaries, Dennis O'Rourke (series prod.), Film Australia in association with Cinema Enterprises (1983).

⁷ By 1992, this had become higher school certificate option (unfortunately short-lived) for Victorian high schools, and then a jointly authored text book to promote Pacific History in schools and in first-year university courses. Written by 11 colleagues from several disciplines and institutions, it is still in use, has been translated into Chinese and is now an eBook. See Max Quanchi and Ron Adams (eds), *Culture Contact in the Pacific* (Cambridge 1992).

⁸ I.C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (St Lucia 1990), 228.

⁹ Stewart Firth, 'Culture and context in the teaching of Pacific History and politics', *Journal of Pacific History*, 46:2 (2011), 207. By then *Pacific Studies*, *The Contemporary Pacific*, *Journal of Pacific Studies*, *Mana*, *Isla* (briefly), *Australian Historical Studies* and the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* were also on my office shelves.

¹⁰ Teresia Teaiwa, 'Preparation for deep learning: a reflection on "teaching" Pacific Studies in the Pacific', *Journal of Pacific History*, 46:2 (2011), 216.

following year and in many cases a life-long interest in the Pacific which has shown through in some graduates' subsequent teaching careers.

A point raised by Anne Perez Hattori and Anita Smith is the manner in which engagement with 'place' and community can enhance the delivery of lectures and tutorials, the design of courses, and project Pacific History out of its university silo and ivory towers.¹¹ My own teaching was certainly influenced by the student fieldwork trips, Pacific History Association (PHA) conferences (after the PHA started in 1980) and the workshops I started to give at History and Social Studies teacher association conferences. This in turn became a campaign to produce classroom materials. After a failed scholarly attempt to publish in the *JPH*, I had more success with *Pacific Islands Monthly*, a teacher magazine, the *Historian*¹² and a Cambridge University Press textbook series on the Pacific Islands.¹³ Others were also working with schools, including Ian Campbell's history of Tonga, edited by his schoolteacher sister as a series of small textbooks for Tongan schools, and Judy Bennett's *Wealth of the Solomons*, edited and distributed as a set of small photocopied booklets.¹⁴ The point made in *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, a report noted in the editor's introduction, is that there is indeed good teaching in university undergraduate and postgraduate classes, but Pacific History generally has not reached down into schools.¹⁵

In 1988, I had moved to Brisbane and, armed with a rapidly increasing Pacific History library and regular conferences and seminars with colleagues across most universities in Australia, and with a sympathetic head of school and rising enrolments, I found that I was now calling myself a Pacific Studies lecturer rather than a Pacific Historian. By this time, I was teaching six courses on a rotation, which were unrecognisable from those I had started with 15 years earlier.¹⁶ However, the transformation was content-driven, rather than pedagogical. Ian Campbell and Deryck Scarr had produced new general histories, and Donald Denoon edited the *Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, and visually there was a feast, with regular documentaries on television that could be copied and screened in class.¹⁷ While content could be easily updated, and there was no shortage of rigorous historical debates, discourse and theoretically inspired symposia, the premier Pacific History professional association, the PHA, had not yet devoted any of its conference sessions to university practice or how Pacific History should be taught. Those teaching in universities had to borrow curriculum design and instructional ideas from their colleagues, or merely update their lecture and tutorial topics each year while retaining their usual tried-and-true, mostly didactic, lecturing tricks.

In the 1990s, I was happy to call the suite of units I taught 'Pacific Studies', as that seemed to follow the multidisciplinary focus which had developed around

¹¹ Anne Perez Hattori, 'Teaching history through service learning at the University of Guam', *Journal of Pacific History*, 46:2 (2011), 221–27; Anita Smith, 'Learning history through heritage place management in the Pacific Islands', *Journal of Pacific History*, 46:2 (2011), 228–35.

¹² In a modest publishing life, my first ever article appeared beside an array of historians including Greg Dening, Manning Clark and David Chandler. I did not realise how impressive this list was until many years later. Max Quanchi, 'European expansion in the Pacific: the Australian colonies and Fiji', *Historian*, 26 (1974), 32–36.

¹³ Max Quanchi, *Pacific People and Change* (Cambridge 1991); Martin Peake, *Pacific People and Society* (Cambridge 1991); Stephanie Fahey and Stephen Duggan, *Pacific People and Place* (Cambridge 1993).

¹⁴ I.C. Campbell, *Island Kingdom: Tonga, ancient and modern* (Christchurch 1992); Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: a history of a Pacific archipelago, 1800–1978* (Honolulu 1987).

¹⁵ Samantha Rose, Max Quanchi and Clive Moore, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific* (Brisbane 2009), 137–44.

¹⁶ The six courses were: 'Culture contact in the Pacific', 'USA in the Asia-Pacific', 'Australia and the Pacific Islands', 'Pacific since 1945', 'Colonialism and independence' and 'Fieldwork'.

¹⁷ Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands*; Deryck Scarr, *The History of the Pacific Islands: kingdoms of the reefs* (South Melbourne 1990); Donald Denoon (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge 1996).

‘Australian Studies’ and ‘Asian Studies’ and what Americans seemed to be calling ‘Area Studies’. Alongside the practical demands of course nomenclature in which ‘studies’ had overtaken the disciplines, my own understanding of what constituted a Pacific History course had changed. I had moved completely away from the British imperial, document-based, archive-driven chronology to encompass the voices of Islanders, material culture and non-print sources, and had discovered that, beyond the British Empire, the histories of the Pacific included the influential and fascinating presence of Chile, the USA, Germany, Japan, Indonesia, the Netherlands and France — representing potentials, as Greg Dvorak scopes here with respect to Japan, that still wait to be realised.¹⁸ I had discovered that Pacific Islanders had agency and were vocal about their new-found nation states, and that there was as much insight on the recent past in USP’s Institute of Pacific Studies 1970s series of *Modern poetry from* (the various new nations being formed) as there was in yet another book on earnest missionaries, Australian companies and fleeting naval and scientific voyages. I had also discovered that Australia had its own Pacific Islander histories and, with the help of Clive Moore, taught about and began researching the visual history of Australian South Sea Islanders. As a couple of scholars alert to outreach and community service, we also helped to write a curriculum for Australian schools on Australian South Sea Islanders,¹⁹ gave workshops and dreamed up Australia Research Council applications. I had returned it seemed, rather late in my Pacific History career, to the theme with which I had begun my first postgraduate research, Australia’s relations with the Pacific. This theme took shape in my teaching, in research and community outreach and became an undergraduate course, a national report and a series of workshops for history teachers, and except for inexplicable administrative obstacles, what might have been a jointly offered unit at two Brisbane universities. This turn towards the community (taken broadly to include schools, museums and institutions, and local immigrant communities) seems to demonstrate the aspect of Pacific History practice, of how Pacific Historians might operate, that is suggested by all contributors, but rarely becomes the topic for conference papers, panels or colloquia. It might equally be noted that we have devoted little attention to postgraduate teaching over the last 40 years and have organised on only a few occasions a panel or meeting on how to improve coursework, supervision, methodology, fieldwork strategies and supervisor–student relations that would benefit postgraduates.²⁰

A topic alluded to by the editor, but not a subject taken up by the contributors, is the value of taking students on fieldwork in the islands. In 1995, by teaming my history students in Brisbane with Grant McCall’s anthropology students from the University of New South Wales (UNSW), and benefiting from McCall’s enthusiasm and organisational skills, we started a 13-year series of fieldwork home-stays for credit points in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and New Caledonia. The emphasis in choosing fieldwork sites was on remote village life, and we thank our many colleagues in the Pacific for their help in facilitating those visits. Every two years the fieldwork piggy-backed with the PHA conferences, adding a scholarly benefit, probably most enjoyed by those who later became honours, masters and PhD students. The benefits worked both ways, with Australian undergraduates developing a closer understanding of the lived experience of Pacific Islands peoples, and in turn, youth in the villages where we stayed benefited from the role models, life stories and educational histories of the visitors.

¹⁸ Greg Dvorak, ‘Connecting the dots: teaching Pacific History in Japan from an archipalegic perspective’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 46:2 (2011), 236–43.

¹⁹ Clive Moore, Max Quanchi and Sharon Bennett, *Australia’s South Sea Islanders: a curriculum resource for secondary schools* (Brisbane 1997).

²⁰ However, I do recall many years ago at a rare postgraduate forum, Hank Nelson speaking up about the absolute necessity for theses to be capped at 85,000 words. Paul Sharrad’s recent postgraduate workshops at Wollongong, on behalf of AAAPS, are a welcome change of direction.

The report, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, contains a brief rationale for five such fieldwork programmes — from UNSW, Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology, Australian Catholic University and Deakin University. In my current position at USP, I have witnessed student tour groups to the Pacific in 2010 from universities in Zurich, Switzerland, several mainland universities in the USA and one group from New Caledonia, but none yet from Australia or New Zealand.

Finally, like Stewart Firth, I ended up teaching Pacific History in the Pacific at USP, to lecture rooms full of Tuvaluans, niVanuatu, iKiribati, Fijians and Tongans, and looking out of the lecture room windows to Nukulau Island, the base for J.B. Williams's store that burnt down and led to the long-running 'US debt' faced by Ratu Seru Cakobau, and more recently the prison home for failed Fiji coup participants. This raises the question, addressed by several contributors, how Pacific History classrooms change by having Pacific Islanders as students. Do Pacific History courses outside the Pacific lack legitimacy and purpose because they attract few Pacific Islander enrolments? In the Pacific, this is a pertinent query — is my teaching better, or different, because I have gone from teaching non-Pacific Islander classes in Australia to teaching Pacific History to a room full of Pacific Islanders? As Anne Perez Hattori and Stewart Firth noted, some of the most exciting learning experiences come when students are challenged to engage with their own histories. Apart from the obvious difficulty because the language of instruction is mostly to second or third English-language speakers who do not have access to the huge libraries and the full Internet access of rim students, my teaching at USP is primarily the same, but much enhanced by the stories that emerge from the students. Two examples will suffice: a recent tutorial oral presentation quickly surveyed Nauru's decolonisation process, but suddenly drew everyone's attention when the iKiribati speaker declared she had been born on Nauru; the other incident involved a history fieldwork trip to Levuka on nearby Ovalau Island, where a Solomon Islands student suddenly disappeared from the group when he discovered a migrant settlement at the rear of Vagadaci village, consisting of descendants of 19th-century Solomon Islander labourers. Such fortuitous learning experiences cannot be planned, but they do make teaching Pacific History in the Pacific different from teaching it on the rim.

My understanding of Pacific History continues to expand and diversify, as I am now planning to teach the historiography of Pacific History, thanks to the efforts of Doug Munro and Brij Lal in publishing work about our fellow Pacific historians' research and individual academic trajectories.²¹ This is an exciting prospect, but a little unrealistic on a global scale, given that USP is probably the only institution still able to offer a full suite of Pacific History courses leading to a Pacific History Major or Minor. The opportunity to teach Pacific Historiography seems long overdue, given that 30 years ago at Martindale Hall near Adelaide it was argued at length whether a new scholarly association was needed, and whether it should be a Pacific Studies or a Pacific History Association. These two fields have evolved differently, although a check list of research and teaching characteristics for Pacific History might overlap with those for Pacific Studies.²² The most interesting recent development at USP answers the editor's call for future courses to link the Pacific with wider world histories. USP's history division has recently taken on the banner 'Pacific History in World History' and, similar to Jane Samson's strategy at Alberta, has merged, dissolved and tinkered with previously

²¹ Brij V. Lal (ed.), *Pacific Islands History: journeys and transformations* (Canberra 1992); Doug Munro (ed.), 'Reflections on Pacific Historiography', special issue of *Journal of Pacific Studies*, 20 (1996); Brij V. Lal (ed.), *Pacific Places, Pacific Historians: essays in honor of Robert C Kiste* (Honolulu 2004); Doug Munro and Brij V. Lal (eds), *Texts and Contexts: reflections in Pacific Islands historiography* (Honolulu 2006); Doug Munro, *The Ivory Tower and Beyond: participant historians of the Pacific* (Newcastle on Tyne 2010).

²² See, 'Characteristics of the study of the Pacific', in Rose, Quanchi and Moore, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, ix.

discrete streams in a plan to reinvigorate undergraduate teaching programmes.²³ History is now presented as an integrated whole, with the aim that all History graduates will see the history of the Pacific seamlessly in a regional and international context. The other development at USP is the history division's involvement in decolonising the national Fiji leaving school certificate, as mentors, editors, authors and co-authors with high school teachers. Topics written into the prescription in the 1960s are finally being replaced with Fiji topics and study options that link Fiji with the region and the world.

Under Paul D'Arcy's guidance, this forum has focused our attention on some lighthouse exemplars in teaching Pacific History, and although these commentaries seem confused over whether they are discussing Pacific History or Pacific Studies courses, it is a pleasure to finally read in the pages of the *Journal of Pacific History* how some of our colleagues have taught, despaired and felt joy in their students' success. Pacific History teaching has not always been, as the editor hopes, 'eclectic and trans-disciplinary by necessity of the non-Western and oral nature of much of its subject matter', but there is now certainly a move in that direction.²⁴

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²³ Jane Samson, 'Pacific History in context', *Journal of Pacific History*, 46:2 (2011), 244–50.

²⁴ D'Arcy, 'Introduction', 197.