

Afterword: after the World Decade

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I want to begin with a few general remarks about Aotearoa and its place in the Pacific. In many respects the New Zealand *pakeha* response to Maori and Pacific Islanders has come a long way in the last 20 years. There is, consciously and subconsciously, a sense that we are enriched by the relationships which have built up in that time. An ever-growing proportion of *pakeha* New Zealanders are now relatively closely connected with Maori or, increasingly, with Samoan and other Pacific island communities. I do not have the most recent census figures, but my educated guess is that close to 20 per cent of our population now identify themselves as Maori or Pacific Islander. The figure for those who do not see themselves as Maori but who have some Polynesian strand in their *whakapapa* would be somewhat higher.

Nevertheless, from time to time I am still suddenly made to realise that we have some way to go before we can genuinely claim to be of the South Pacific. In my own recent political experience, New Zealand's response to the coup in Fiji in 1987, and the unilateral attempts to break an agreement with Samoa over immigration quotas in 1989, were salutary reminders of the strength of lingering Europeaness. Nevertheless, one of the better foreign policy decisions made by Australia and New Zealand in recent years was to shift from the electoral group known as Western European and Others, to Asia

Pacific in our UNESCO membership, thereby recognising at last that our future interests were more likely to be influenced by our geography than by the history of 80 per cent of the population. It is a diplomatic move which we have yet to make at the United Nations itself.

Vaka Moana was the Pacific states' response to the opportunity offered by the World Decade for Cultural Development, a UNESCO program which began in 1988 and comes to an end this year. At the meeting of Pacific representatives in Auckland in 1991, Antony Hooper proposed the development of a coherent Pacific program, with a central unifying theme. The idea was to take advantage of the funding offered through the World Decade, to make a positive practical and philosophical contribution for the Pacific in this field.

As stated by Epeli Hau'ofa in an earlier chapter, it is the ocean which unites and connects us. As I recall it was Malama Meleisea who made the same point to us as we set out on this journey six years ago. The Auckland meeting resolved to make navigation its general theme, and adopted the title *Vaka Moana*. At that time the best known World Decade project was the Silk Roads, and discussion was just beginning on the possibility of an African Iron roads project. We therefore added a subtitle—the Ocean Roads.

Support in principle for a Pacific program was given at the 1991 session of the UNESCO General Conference, and a *Vaka Moana* board was finally established in 1993, comprising one representative from each of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and one from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands communities. Representatives of the Australian and New Zealand National Commissions, the University of the South Pacific and the South Pacific Commission were co-opted. Jackie Lewis Harris of the St Louis Museum was added to the board at the 1994 meeting. Mali Voi became the executive officer when he was appointed to the Apia office as cultural adviser at the end of 1993.

From the beginning of 1994, UNESCO funding has come through the Participation Program and the Regular Program for a variety of projects, most of them arising out of a brainstorming session at the establishment meeting in 1993. Mali Voi has already referred to several of them. Others include the heads of cultural agencies, who hold their second meeting in Suva next week. Samoa arranged some opportunities for craftspeople to exchange experience and practices, as did Te Waka Toi in New Zealand. *Vaka Moana* initiated a week-long

seminar on traditional navigation at the beginning of 1996, a gathering which brought together scholars, navigators and boat builders. Comprehensive short-wave radio coverage of the 1996 Festival of Pacific Arts, funded by *Vaka Moana*, was broadcast out of the Apia office. Since October 1995, Radio New Zealand International has been broadcasting a weekly 15-minute short-wave program on culture in the Pacific, a program which is now rebroadcast in nine Pacific countries.

Earlier this year the Intergovernmental Committee for the World Decade resolved that funding arrangements would be made to provide ongoing support for five projects, most of which developed in the latter years of the Decade. Funding for these projects will now come from within the framework of the general and mainstream part of UNESCO's program and budget.

Vaka Moana is one of the five projects, and tentative indications are that between US\$60,000 and US\$100,000 will be set aside in the Regular Program for two years from January 1998. We should be able to expand this sum by using the Participation Program. This program entitles member states to apply for funding for several projects in the two years, though culture has to compete in the process with education, communications, science and social science.

Previous authors have already made reference to the report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, a commission chaired by former United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, *Our Creative Diversity*. It is already clear that the general philosophy of this report is to form the basis of UNESCO's cultural program for the foreseeable future.

One of the original members of the Commission was Lourdes Arizpe, then the director of the Institute for Anthropological Research at the National University of Mexico, and former president of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. In July 1994, Madame Arizpe left the Commission to become the assistant director general for culture at UNESCO in Paris, effectively the head of UNESCO's cultural program. She effectively then became the chief executive officer for the Commission, and from the latest draft budget and program document (C/5) it appears that she regards the De Cuellar report as the basis of UNESCO's cultural programs in the future. Reorganisation of the cultural sector staff framework also points to an intention to adopt the general thrust of the report.

This is not the place to spend much time on what this means for the organisation's cultural direction. The New Zealand National Commission and our culture sub-commission have spent some time working through the report, and reflecting on what it means for us and for the Pacific member states. Our impression is that the report and the likelihood of its implementation augur well for the kind of priorities we want to set. Our immediate challenge is to trawl through the C/5 document (the program and budget for 1998–99) to find other sources of extra funding and general support.

In our view, *Our Creative Diversity* reflects an intention to move away from a Eurocentric approach to culture, development and heritage issues, and a move towards greater support for intangible heritage issues and programs. For instance, the international agenda at the conclusion of the report, includes a challenge to UNESCO and the UNDP to 'take the lead in assisting countries to formulate new human development strategies which preserve and enrich cultural values and ethnic heritage'.

The essential orientation of *Our Creative Diversity* presents us with a clear opportunity to secure financial and moral support for Pacific-sensitive policies. The rather extraordinary cluster of meetings in Suva involving UNESCO in a range of cultural discussions and workshops is, I hope, an encouraging straw in the new wind which is now blowing.

Thirteen years ago, Dr Langi Kavaliku and I took part in the ceremony to open the UNESCO office for Pacific states in Apia. At that time, there were five members of UNESCO in the South Pacific (and it *was* the South Pacific). Today there are fourteen, with only the Federated States of Micronesia and Belau of the independent states in the Pacific not yet members, and we are hopeful that the Federated States will join us this year. As a sub-region, we are also now seeking to forge closer links with the French territories in the region, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna. A number of our activities involve Tokelau, and eventually we should find ways to engage the people of American Samoa, Guam, the Marianas, Rapanui and, of course, Hawaii.

Over the last few years we have found that we can succeed in securing attention for this part of the world by working together. The fact that Tonga could beat off Vietnam for a place on the Executive Board in 1993 and that Samoa came within a handful of votes of

beating Pakistan for a seat in 1995 confirmed our collective strength, not least to ourselves. In the way in which the United Nations system operates, our fourteen or so votes give us a rare opportunity to flex some muscle.

In the recent evaluation of the sixty or so UNESCO field offices, the Apia office was in the top five for its effectiveness and management. Edna Tait and her colleagues deserve a good deal of credit for the energy with which they have transformed the office and are implementing their programs over the last eighteen months.

During the most recent meeting of the Executive Board in Paris, the deputy director-general, Mr Badran, took the initiative to start preparation for a meeting to be called Audience Pacific, to take place during the general conference later this year. The initiative came out of a conclusion on his part that UNESCO has so far done less than justice to its Pacific member states. We are to have a three-hour opportunity to present ourselves and our list of priorities to a range of senior staff members, and to start a process in which UNESCO will give greater attention to member states of the Pacific.

I have gone through these tangible indicators of the present UNESCO climate to illustrate my belief that we have an unusual opportunity to use the services of a major United Nations agency for the benefit of the region. Ultimately, our greatest strength is our own people, but I am not at all averse to making the most of others' resources. A partial reimbursement, perhaps for all the fish they have taken!

Although we keep singing the praises of *Vaka Moana* to UNESCO secretariat staff in Paris, and we have had some success in securing support for the overall program, the reality is that since 1993 we have run a series of largely unrelated and *ad hoc* activities, many of them one-off. My major hope is that out of our reflections will come some philosophical basis from which we can develop a more coherent strategy for UNESCO's cultural activities in the Pacific, and perhaps some tentative indicators for the kind of activities which we might develop over the next five years or so. What follows is a short list of possible activities.

- the discussion showed that the idea of some kind of Pacific Cultural Arbitration system had considerable support. To that we added one suggestion that the idea was also worth taking up on a larger stage, and another, that we might also

give some consideration to the drafting of a national bill of cultural rights for reference to governments in the region.

- There was an indication from the head of the Apia office that she was already working on an expansion of the Associated Schools Project and that she was attracted to the notion that there could be some connection between the ASP project and the promotion of World Heritage sites.
- It may appear to be cynical to do so, but we might as well capitalise on the Director General's particular interests. For instance, to advance proposals which fit comfortably within his Culture of Peace, and to promote greater intersectorality with the Communications, Education, Science and Social Science sectors. We should also capitalise on the good personal connections which we now have with the ADG for Culture and her senior officials.
- Now that at last we have had the chance to spend three days giving some serious consideration to the broader issues and realities surrounding or undergirding Culture and Development, I would like to think that we could make some provision for some other similar opportunity for reflection in three or four years' time.
- We need to keep offering support for projects which feature both contemporary and traditional dimensions of cultural issues.
- In the 1970s, UNESCO began a project which sought to locate and to describe as many as possible of the artefacts and *taonga* from New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. In the case of New Zealand material alone, well over 10000 items are known to be in European and North American collections. Much of the material was collected by Cook and his colleagues and the French explorers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, with the result that there are some items which pre-date anything found in collections kept in Pacific museums. The first of the New Zealand museums were not established until the 1860s. Apart from the catalogue of artefacts in Australian collections, the project was never completed. Much of the ground work has been done, though

there is still a great deal more to do. I hope that under *Vaka Moana* we can finish the task, and make available around the region on CD ROM and through other vehicles the details of what is where.

- The Communications sector of UNESCO provides for assistance in the fields of endangered languages, archives and oral history. Incidentally, I was rather surprised to see that in the recent publication on endangered languages, there was a map showing the endangered Western European languages, but not one of Melanesia. The recent establishment of the Memory of the World project, in which Australia has been closely involved, seeks to identify the world's significant documents and to register them in a way somewhat similar to the World Heritage list. National Archives in New Zealand has proposed the inclusion of the Treaty of Waitangi and the list of names of women who signed the 1892 petition seeking universal franchise, a petition which led to the world's first provision for votes for women. There is considerable capacity in all these elements of UNESCO's programme for the Pacific to receive assistance.
- The Navigation workshop which took place in Auckland last year produced some further ongoing activity, and I hope we can continue to support that.
- Hana Ayala's paper on Tourism and Culture and the ensuing discussion open up another package of interesting possibilities.
- It would be good for the programme and for the region as a whole if we could find some ways to lift the profile of *Vaka Moana*. A significant first step might be to persuade at least one head of government to find a way to put the broader issues of the fundamental importance of culture and tradition on the agenda for a Pacific Forum.

In summary, since 1993 we have made a beginning. The growing strength of this region's relationship with UNESCO and UNESCO's own current changes in direction within the Cultural sector give us an unparalleled opportunity. I think we are ready to seize that opportunity.