



# **Webs of Significance**

**Part IV. PNG -  
Yesterday, Today, &  
Tomorrow**

## Part IV. Papua New Guinea – Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

Common history – communal living and shared experiences – is, perhaps, the most important factor that shapes a people's culture (thoughts and general behavior).

The constraints of this course do not allow us to dwell in detail on Papua New Guinea's history; instead, after a brief look at the timeline of key events in recorded PNG history, we will focus on class discussions of socio-economic and cultural changes sweeping across this nation. We will use the knowledge we have gained in the past weeks to analyse these changes and share our thoughts with each other.

## Timeline: Papua New Guinea

### A chronology of key events

**16th century AD** - Ships from China and the Malay Empire trade with islanders.

**1526** - Portuguese sailor Jorge de Meneses is the first European visitor. He names one of the islands "ilhas dos Papuas" or "land of fuzzy-haired people".

**1546** - Spanish explorer Inigo Ortiz de Retes names the other main island New Guinea because the islanders resemble the people of Guinea in Africa.

**1768** - French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville lands at the islands during his circumnavigation of the world. Gives name to an island just to the east of New Guinea.

**1873** - Port Moresby is named after one of several English explorers to lay claim to the island for Great Britain.

### Europeans, Australians take control

**1884** - Britain establishes a protectorate over south-east New Guinea, while Germany annexes the northern part of New Guinea.

**1906** - Control of British New Guinea transferred to the newly independent Commonwealth of Australia and renamed Territory of Papua.

**1914** - Australian forces occupy German New Guinea during World War I.

**1921** - After the war the League of Nations grants Australia a mandate to run German New Guinea. This new Mandated Territory of New Guinea is governed totally separately from the Territory of Papua.

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**1933** - Gold-prospectors lead expeditions into the highlands. Here they find more than a million people living in fertile mountain valleys, their way of life apparently unchanged since the Stone Age.

**1942** - Japanese forces occupy parts of both territories.

**1949** July - Australia establishes a joint administration over both territories called the Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

**1951** November - A 28-member Legislative Council established by Australia.

**1954** June - Aerial survey reveals several previously undiscovered highland valleys inhabited by up to 100,000 people.

**1961** March - First elections involving indigenous population.

**1963** May - UN transfers control of West New Guinea to Indonesia. Today this region is called Papua.

**1964** June - A 64-member House of Assembly replaces Legislative Council and for the first time indigenous representatives are elected to the majority of seats in the legislature.

**1971** July - Renamed Papua New Guinea (PNG).

**1973** February - Indonesia and PNG agree position of Irian Jaya border.

**1973** December - Granted self-government. Michael Somare, chief minister in an interim coalition government, is sworn in as head of the governing Executive Council.

**1975** April - New currency, the kina, replaces the Australian dollar.

#### **Independence**

**1975** 16 September - Attains full independence from Australia. Sir Michael Somare becomes PM.

**1975** - Bougainville provincial government votes to secede from PNG. Somare's government retaliates by suspending the provincial government and withholding payments to the province.

**1977** June-July - First parliamentary elections since independence.

#### **Separatist struggle**

**1989** April/May - Separatist rebels on Bougainville begin prolonged armed struggle against the government. Secessionist, Francis Ona, proclaims "a republic of Bougainville". The recently-formed Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), anxious about environmental destruction and unhappy that profits are leaving the island, forces the closure of the Australian-owned Panguna copper mine.

**1994** - PM Sir Julius Chan signs agreement with several Bougainville secessionist leaders which provides a transitional administration in Bougainville. Bougainville

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Revolutionary Army leaders are not signatories; they continue to fight for full independence.

**1995** April - The Bougainville Transitional Government is sworn in under leadership of Theodore Miriong. The three seats reserved for the BRA remain vacant.

**1996** - Theodore Miriong is assassinated at his home in south-west Bougainville. He is replaced by Gerard Sinato.

**1997** February-March - Government hires mercenaries from Sandline International to support government troops in Bougainville, sparking an army mutiny and civil unrest. Prime Minister Chan is forced to resign.

**1997** September - The government declares a national state of disaster following a prolonged drought thought to have been caused by the El Nino weather phenomenon. Over 1,000 people are killed and a further 1.2 million are put at risk of starvation.

#### Truce

**1997** October - Burnham Truce marks the end of the decade-old armed struggle by Bougainville separatists.

**1997** December - Countries in the region establish the Truce Monitoring Group to oversee compliance with the Burnham Truce until 30 April 1998 when a ceasefire is to be signed. The New Zealand-led group also comprises troops from Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu. All of them are unarmed.

**1998** April - Permanent ceasefire signed in Bougainville by government representatives and secessionist leaders. Australian-led Peace Monitoring Group takes over from Truce Monitoring Group.

**1998** July - Three tsunamis - gigantic waves generated by earthquakes - hit the north-west coast obliterating villages and killing 3,000 people.



PNG lies on the "Ring of Fire", an area prone to volcanic eruptions

**1998** August - United Nations establishes the UN Political Office in Bougainville at the request of the PNG government.

**1999** 1 January - Bougainville Reconciliation Government replaces the Bougainville Transitional Government. Former rebel leader Joseph

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Kabui and Gerard Sinato are nominated as co-leaders.

**1999** May - Joseph Kabui elected president of the Bougainville People's Congress.

**1999** December - John Momis sworn in as governor of Bougainville.

**2000** November - Authorities say all 1,000 inhabitants of the Duke of York atoll will have to be relocated because the island is slowly sinking due to global warming.

**2001** August - Bougainville Peace Agreement, guaranteeing a referendum in 10 to 15 years on Bougainville's future political status, is signed in Arawa.

**2002** August - Sir Michael Somare elected as prime minister for a third time, after a violent and chaotic election.

**2004** August - Australia deploys police to help fight rampant crime.

**2004** December - Australian study warns that PNG is on course for social, economic collapse.

#### **Bougainville autonomy**

**2005** May - Australia withdraws its police officers after the PNG Supreme Court rules that their deployment is unconstitutional.

Bougainville islanders elect their first autonomous government. Former separatist rebel Joseph Kabui becomes president.

**2007** May - Parliament passes a law to allow casinos and online gambling. It is hoped that the activity could boost the economy.

**2007** August - Sir Michael Somare re-elected as premier.

**2007** November - Cyclone Guba causes flooding which kills 163 and leaves more than 13,000 displaced in Oro and Milne provinces.

**2008** June - Bougainville President Joseph Kabui dies.

**2008** December - Former rebel James Tanis elected autonomous president of Bougainville.

**2009** December - China signs a deal to import liquified natural gas from Papua New Guinea.

#### **End of Somare era**

**2011** April-June - Prime Minister Michael Somare is suspended for two weeks over charges of misconduct dating back 20 years. He extends his absence for medical reasons and undergoes heart surgery. In June, he resigns because of poor health.

**2011** August - A defection from government ranks paves the way for the appointment of Peter O'Neill as prime minister, replacing acting prime minister Sam Abal, who mounts legal action over the move.

Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country\\_profiles/3028825.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/3028825.stm)

(17/09/2011)

## Melanesia

Melanesia is a sub-region of Oceania, extending from the western end of the Pacific Ocean to the Arafura Sea, and eastward to Fiji. The region comprises most of the islands immediately north and northeast of Australia.

### Geographic definition of Melanesia, surrounded by a pink line

The name *Melanesia* (from Greek: μέλας *black*; νῆσος, *islands*) was first used by Jules Dumont d'Urville in 1832 to denote an ethnic and geographical grouping of islands distinct from Polynesia and Micronesia. →

The term Melanesia can be used in either an anthropological or a geographical context. In the former, the term refers to one of the three regions of Oceania whose pre-colonial population generally belongs to one ethno-cultural family as a result of centuries of maritime migrations. The geographic conception of Melanesia is used as a reference to the area where political, ethnic, and linguistic distinctions are not relevant.



The term is also present in geopolitics, where the Melanesian Spearhead Group Preferential Trade Agreement is a regional trade treaty involving the states of Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

## People

The original inhabitants of the group of islands now named Melanesia were likely the ancestors of the present-day Papuan-speaking people. They appear to have occupied these islands as far east as the main islands in the Solomon Islands, including Makira and possibly the smaller islands farther to the east.

It was particularly along the north coast of New Guinea and in the islands north and east of New Guinea that the Austronesian people came into contact with these preexisting populations of Papuan-speaking peoples, probably around 4,000 years ago.

### Ethno-cultural definition of Melanesia



There was probably a long period of interaction that resulted in many complex changes in genetics, languages, and culture. It is possible that from this area a very small group of people (speaking an Austronesian language) departed to the east to

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become the forebears of the Polynesian people. This finding is, however, contradicted by a study published by Temple University finding that Polynesians and Micronesians have little genetic relation to Melanesians; instead, they found significant distinctions between groups living within the Melanesian islands. Genome scans show Polynesians have little genetic relationship to Melanesians.

Melanesians, together with Papuan people, are the only known modern humans whose prehistoric ancestors interbred with the Denisova hominin, sharing 4%–6% of their genome with this ancient human species.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesia>

# DEBATE TIME!!!

## **Topics 4 Class Discussions & Debates**

In May 2011, the Department of Community Development and the University of Papua New Guinea organized an interesting symposium on “Women, Kastom & Modernity.” Papers presented covered a range of often controversial topics that triggered off some heated debates.

Please look abstracts of the symposium presentations in Appendix IV and choose any two (2) topics that you would like to debate in class next week.

Debate performance goes towards your class participation and is assessed by your ability to make a convincing argument supporting your position on an issue.