STILL FURTHER NOTES ON 'MAASINA RULE'

In a paper recently published in *JASO* Brian Murdoch has usefully expanded on the possibility, raised by Kennedy and noted in a paper of my own, that the ultimate origin of the term that was rendered as 'Marching Rule' in the post-war Solomon Islands was 'Marchant's Rule'.[1] The account of the Marchant/Kennedy period on Gela which Murdoch has reconstructed renders somewhat more likely the possibility that 'Rulu Blong Maasini',[2] as news of it spread from Gela, provided a label 'Are'are leaders could borrow, reanalyse and adapt when they were formulating the ideology of a movement that needed a name.

   If that indeed was the ultimate origin of the term, what surely matters more was what the leaders of the movement intended in using the label, and what they told adherents it meant. Virtually all the evidence (including the testimony of Aliki Nono'-ohimae, one of the two 'Are'are leaders most centrally involved in creating the movement, to Dr. Daniel de Coppet and to myself, as well as to Allan many years earlier) indicates that they called their movement 'Maasina Rule' to underline the fraternal solidarity central in its ideology. They clearly meant 'maasina' rather than 'Marchant'.

   Could the 'Are'are leaders have picked up a term they had heard from Gela, reanalysed it into 'the rule of Brotherhood' on the basis of the similarity of 'Marchant' as rendered in Solomons Pidgin to their own word *maasina*, and used it to label their political movement? And would speakers of other Malaita languages, or other Solomon Islanders, have accepted a word from 'Are'are in place of their own? Murdoch doubts it.

   On the latter point, the answer is clearly 'yes': adherents of Maasina Rule accepted a kind of 'Are'are ideological hegemony in matters of custom and language, at least in the early years of the movement. Thus in 1947 the Maasina Rule chiefs presented to the British administration an 'Are'are codification of 'Malaita Custom', based on *araha* and *araha 'ou'ou* ('chiefs' in the hierarchical 'Are'are political organisation, quite atypical of the region), as though it represented the custom and political organisation of all Malaita. On the former point, we need to look at some linguistic evidence.

   First, speakers of 'Are'are are apparently given to secondary etymologies, based on what is almost word-play; and they elaborate symbolic equivalences based on homonymy. I have illustrated the 'Are'are permutation of English 'government' into *Kahe-manu*, 'the wings of a bird'.[3] What historically are Proto-

North Malaita forms, **namo*, 'pool' and **ramo*, 'warrior', have
phonologically coalesced in 'Are'are as homonyms. 'Are'are
symbolism apparently elaborates on their equivalence, as it does
with the homonyms *siwa*, 'nine' and *siwa*, 'blood bounty'. The re-
analysis of *'rulu blong Maasini'* into *'Maasina rulu'*, 'rule
of brotherhood', still seems to me to require a considerable
leap of the imagination. But it is certainly possible, parti-
cularly inasmuch as we have no other suggestions as to why 'Are
'are leaders would have created a label out of a vernacular term,
permuted in meaning, and conjoined with an English term. Un-
fortunately Nori, who would probably have been able to tell us
had we probed carefully enough, is dead.

On this point it is worth quoting verbatim a short excerpt
from an account I recorded (29 March 1964) from Jonathan Fifi'i.
Fifi'i became a close friend of Nori when they served together
in the S.I. Labour Corps, and they jointly held discussions with
American military personnel. Fifi'i returned to Guadalcanal and
was there when Nori and Aliki actually organised the movement.
Fifi'i returned to his home in Kwaio when he heard news of the
movement, and took part in a crucial meeting with Nori at Sina-
lagu, where the ideology of the movement was explained to him
and to leaders from the Kwaio interior. Fifi'i later became
Head Chief for Kwaio, and was imprisoned with Nori. Fifi'i's
account, in Solomons Pidgin and here presented with my trans-
lation, is as follows:

> Mi hirim nao - nius wē Nori hemi statem waka -
> disfala sāmting. Nori hemi statem, hemi nemem dis-
> fala sāmting 'Maasina Rulu'. Disfala 'maasina',
> mining long hem long languisi blong 'Are'are,
> 'barāta'. Oraet, mifala long hia long Kwaio, long
> toktok blong mifala, 'waasina'. Nao, hemi sei
> 'Maasina' mini fō everiwane raon long Malaita,
> mekem mifala olsemu wan barāta. Dei kani kerem
> nara sāmting fō 'rulu' long languisi blong mifala,
> an blong 'Are'are. Hemi tanem moa hemi takem wān
> wate insaet long English, kolem 'rulu'. Nao i
> minim, mifala everiwane fō Maasina, an mifala rulim
> mifala fō duem gut sāmting an fō mekem wān maen,
> fō duem wan sāmting.

> I heard about it then - the news that Nori had
> started this work. Nori started it; he named
> this thing 'Maasina Rule'. The meaning of this
> 'maasina' in the 'Are'are language is 'brother'.
> For us here in Kwaio, in our language it is
> 'waasina'. Now, he said that what 'Maasina'
> meant was that all the people around Malaita
> were to be like brothers to one another. There
> is no way of saying 'rule' in our language or
> in 'Are'are. So he turned it a different way
> and used an English word 'rule'. Now what he

> meant was that all of us were to be as brothers,
> and were to 'rule' ourselves in order to ac-
> complish good work and in order to be of one
> mind, to work as one.

Maasina itself is straightforward enough. This is the 'Are-'are reflex of a dyadic or reciprocal kin term labelling the relationship between siblings. (Thus, Kwaio *rua waasina*, 'a pair of siblings', *rua waiamana*, 'a father and child'.) In this construction *ma-* is a reciprocal prefix (Proto-Malaitan *ng^wa-/ng^wai-*); *asi* is the reflex of an ancient Oceanic term for 'younger sibling' (Proto-Oceanic **tansi*); and *-na* is a grammatical particle indicating the reciprocal relationship, and similarly ancient in Oceanic. Cognate and very similar terms occur among almost all languages of the Cristobal-Malaita subgroup of Oceanic Austronesian: the languages of Malaita, San Cristobal, and the northest coast of Guadalcanal.[4] Such dyadic kin terms go back at least to Proto-Oceanic, probably to Proto-Austronesian.[5] Most peoples of this area would have recognized that *ma-asi-na* is cognate with their own equivalents, and would have understood its reference to fraternal solidarity, once explicated. To others in the central Solomons not speaking Cristobal-Malaita languages, *ma-asi-na* would probably have been opaque - and hence unintelligible or open to reanalysis. If Murdoch is correct that the term was an 'Are'are reanalysis of 'Marchant' in 'Rulu blong Maasini', people of Gela and the adjacent Guadalcanal coast might well have interpreted it in the 'original' way when the doctrine arrived from Malaita, as referring to the pre-war scheme of local government.

As I have recently noted, the sources of the ideas that temporarily crystallized in Maasina Rule were diverse.[6] Some apparently came by way of Gela well before Kennedy's and Marchant's venture in administrative reform there. I have published a text in which the Kwaio Maasina Rule leader Anifelo (son of Bell's assassin Basiana) describes meetings held in Gela by the Anglican missionary Richard Fallowes at least as early as 1939. Fallowes urged that Solomon Islanders confront the Protectorate Government to demand greater local representation and a loosening of the bonds of colonial rule.[7]

In my 1978 paper on this subject I alluded to the formative influence of a government scheme in the 'Are'are District prior to World War II (and contemporaneous with the Marchant/Kennedy scheme) to counter *anomie*and depopulation. I was privileged to share in a conversation in July 1978 in which the co-founder of Maasina Rule, Aliki Nono'ohimae, and a former District Officer, Martin Clemens (who with his colleague Bengough planned and administered this scheme), reminisced about the work of laying out meeting areas, building 'roads', and engaging in collective meetings and civic projects. The formative influence of this scheme on the programme and style of Maasina Rule is unmistakable.

All this is to say that the multiple strands woven into Maasina Rule ideology came from diverse sources, including

earlier cultism, British administrative schemes, Christianity, Fallowes' ideas, and American influence. The ultimate origin of the label 'Maasina Rule', and of other elements, seems less interesting and important to me than the creation from them by Solomon Islanders of an ideology and political framework that were remarkably powerful and impressively successful in the face of repression. Doubtless, just as the 'Are'are founders of this ideology and political order reinterpreted and reanalysed exogenous ideas (as they may have done with 'Marchant's Rule'), so local communities in Gela, Guadalcanal and other islands doubtless reanalysed and placed new constructions on ideas emanating from Malaita.

There is no doubt that, as with the ferment stirred by Rev. Fallowes on Ysabel and Gela in the 1930s and Noto'i's 1939 cult movement in Kwaio, there was widespread local disaffection with the pre-war style of colonial administration in the Solomons well before Maasina Rule. But I have not as yet uncovered or seen in the work of my colleagues, any convincing evidence that when communities on Guadalcanal, Gela, San Cristobal and other islands in the central and southeastern Solomons proclaimed their adherence to Maasina Rule, they saw it as other than a Malaita-based movement whose central leaders were Nori, Aliki, Nono'ohimae and Timothy George. The Guadalcanal Maasina Rule Chief Jacob Vuza, a decorated World War II hero who was exiled to Fiji for his role in the movement (and later knighted) indicated in interviews (which I taped in 1970) that he saw himself as a local leader of a Malaita-based movement, and was closely in touch with his 'Are'are counterparts. The 'unity' of Maasina Rule which Murdoch questions is no anthropologically-created myth; and it is this very unity which makes the movement so interesting.

However, the people on Gela - under sway of the Anglican Melanesian Mission for decades, and with a rather different history of colonial experience because of the proximity of Tulagi - may well have adopted Maasina Rule for their own ends; and they may in fact have used the general climate of disaffection to reassert their commitment to 'Marchant's Rule'. Research on Guadalcanal, San Cristobal, Gela, and other islands in the Solomons is needed to redress imbalances in a Malaita-centred view. I would of course be delighted if Murdoch or others could gather direct oral historical and documentary evidence from such areas. It will have to be done soon, since the number of key participants is dwindling with the passing years.

'Sir Charles Allen', referred to on several occasions by Murdoch, is in fact Sir Colin Allan, able scholar and last British Governor of the B.S.I.P.

ROGER M. KEESING

NOTES

[1]See Brian Murdoch, 'On Calling Other People Names: A Historical
Note on "Marching Rule" in the Solomon Islands', *JASO*, Vol. XI
no. 3 (1980), pp. 189-96; D.G. Kennedy, 'Marching Rule in the
British Solomon Islands Protectorate: A Memorandum on the Origin
of the Term', MS. (Rhodes House Library, Oxford), n.d.; R.M.
Keesing, 'Politico-Religious Movements and Anti-Colonialism on
Malaita: Maasina Rule in Historical Perspective', *Oceania*, Vols.
XLVIII and XLIX (1978).

[2]I write Murdoch's 'Masini' (as a Pidgin rendering of 'Marchant')
as 'Maasini' to represent the lengthening of the initial vowel.
Unless it had been so lengthened, stress would have been on the
penultimate vowel, and pronunciation would not have approached
the British pronunciation of 'Marchant'.

[3]Keesing, 'Politico-Religious Movements', footnote 49.

[4]See C. Cashmore, 'Some Proto-Eastern Oceanic Reconstructions
with Reflexes in Southest Solomon Island Languages', *Oceanic
Linguistics,*Vol. VIII (1969); A. Pawley, 'On the Internal Re-
lationships of Eastern Oceanic Languages', in R.C. Green and
M. Kelly (eds.), *Pacific Anthropological Records*, No. 12 (1972),
[Honolulu: Department of Anthropology, Bishop Museum]; and D.
Tryon, 'Towards a Classification of Solomon Islands Languages',
Paper presented at the Third International Conference on Austro-
nesian Linguistics, Denpasar, Bali, January 1981.

[5]See R.M. Blust, 'Early Austronesian Social Organization',
Current Anthropology, Vol. XXI, no. 2 (1980).

[6]R.M. Keesing, 'Antecedents of Maasina Rule: Some Further Notes',
Journal of Pacific History, Vol. XV, no. 2 (1980).

[7]See *ibid*. 'That's what we heard from Mr. Fallowes', said Ani-
felo. 'After that we went back and did the work of Maasina
Rule'; he noted that the 'Are'are leaders Hoasihau and Aliki
Nono'ohimae were at these meetings called by Fallowes.