

EXAMINERS' REPORT

Please excuse the handwriting
Temporarily in Adelaide.
PWC

Candidate's name: August Kituai

Degree to be awarded: M.A.

Thesis title: The Banabans of Ocean Island

1. Examiners are invited to make specific comments and suggestions on the thesis in the space provided hereunder. Additional comments may be attached on separate sheets.
2. Please specify which parts of the report, if any, may ~~not~~ be shown to the candidate at the conclusion of the examining. *No restriction PWC*
3. Would you please try to return your report by: 9 July 1981

REPORT:

Award of the M.A. is recommended.

The study is not comprehensive but this is presumably because he had to work from papers available in Adelaide (whereas the main documentation is in Suva, Tarawa + London); and that he was unable to visit Banaba or Rabi.

The study is also very partisan - which is much the easiest stance to take. In many instances contrary evidence is not presented, presumably because the author did not have access to it. But even where he did, the problem of skewed interpretation occurs. For example in the body of the thesis he makes the total case, ^{unqualified,} that Banaba is not geographically part of the Gilberts (a case which can be argued several different ways depending on the criteria), yet in his own introduction (p. 7) he says that "Ocean Island is one of the eleven atolls & five coral islands that make up the Gilbert group".

Again in relation to language, he assumes that ~~at~~ at the time of first European contact the Banabans had a totally different language from the Gilbertians (as the Banabans themselves insisted, on the advice of their

English public relations consultants, in their public
 diplomacy), but that because of the Liberton Bible
 & Liberton phosphate workers this different Bambara
 language "sturdy & sadly disappointed" (p. 10-11). But even now
 Liberton have long worked in Naama, & they Naama still
 speak Naama, & Tuvahon have used the Tuvahon Bible very
 long longer than the Bambaras used the Liberton, yet they
 still speak Tuvahon. All the ^{reliable} evidence I have seen
 indicates that the reason the Bambaras speak Liberton
 is that that was their language at the time Europeans
 first arrived, with, as Maude ~~was~~ was quoted, some
 distinct words & idiomatic phrases, probably come over from
 one of the early ^{non-Liberton} components of Bambara's contact population. Various
 parts of the Liberton have dialectal variations. Naama, on the
 other hand, is quite a separate language.

One could comment at length on the data on
 racial stock & cultural patterns in relation to its relevance
 for the case of Bambara nationalism.

However, these are details. A word of the thesis is
 recommended. Some other notes for Mr. Kitani attached.
 Would you please send copies to him & to the advisors & examiners.

PLEASE MAKE AN EXPLICIT RECOMMENDATION BELOW IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS:

- a) the degree for which the candidate has submitted himself for examination should be awarded; or
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AFTER EXAMINATION OF THE THESIS I RECOMMEND THAT: _____

(a) the degree of M.A. be awarded.

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DATE: _____

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R. G. CROCOMBE

1 June 1981

BROWN OCEAN MIGRATIONISM

A note for the author

Much emphasis is understandably given to the Banabans' deep emotional attachment to their island and that "Banabans since their removal to Rabi in 1945 have repeatedly expressed their desire to return home" (p. 42). I used to be more convinced of this until I found out how strongly their English public relations commentators kept reminding them that they had to push home two lines as selling points for maximum external political leverage.

Every effort to in fact get them to do what they say they want to do ^(i.e. go back to Banaba) has failed. Harry Munde went there with a ship in the late 1940s, with arrangements to take back ^{free,} everyone who wanted to go. Not one. He waited & waited, and asked everyone to sign whether they wanted to stay in Rabi or return to Banaba. Every one wanted to stay in Rabi. And it has been so ever since.

Is it because the once rich & fertile Banaba has been destroyed by mining? No, Banaba before mining was one of the poorest, least fertile, least attractive islands in the Pacific - including to Banabans, who left it at the slightest opportunity - and stayed away. There

is ample evidence of this from long before phosphate was discovered. When you get to Banaba one day you'll see why! Rabi is 8 times bigger, much more fertile, plenty water (cf. Banaba's constant water ^{shortage} problems), within a mile of Vamua Lave with its faultlines, hospitals, high schools etc.

Anyway, as the case developed, the Public Relations consultants insisted that they could not win the Gilbertese share of phosphate royalties for the Banabans unless the Banabans went back "home" to "prove" they really wanted it. Banaban leaders agreed it was politically vital, but could not persuade their people to go (including themselves!). Finally, all promises were applied, two ships were chartered, newsmen + ~~camera~~ ^{camera} crews were arranged to go with them to give the coverage in the world press + film. They decided \$300 (out of the 2,500) would be the minimum necessary ^{to go}, but they couldn't get that number so they filled it with Gilbertese from Rabi + Lave who don't get royalties (but to pose as Banabans - they got used to this). + needed money + were paid to go. ^{None would} have gone (including no Banabans) without the promise that they would not have to stay for long, and that they would be paid for making

the trip. Even though paid and promised, the
great majority insisted on returning to Rabi by
good opportunity. And did.

Every time foreign women or dignitaries go to
~~Rabi~~ Banaba a group of girls, presented as
Banaba Banaban girls, sings them the song about how
they love their homeland & can never be parted from
it. In fact, though ^{no one is told,} every one of
the girls is Gilbertese ^(they can't get Banaban girls to go there) - they do it for a regular
fee, and the tears flow down their faces - as is
required in the contract!

By the time I visited Banaba, only 30
of the 300 remained. Did they love their
homeland? Like hell. They were complaining
bitterly that the leaders were forcing them to stay
whereas they'd been promised they could go back &
some others take a turn. But the leaders
couldn't get anyone else to go. And none of the
leaders would even stay - nor would I! Those staying
were paid a ^{by the Banaban Council} salary for doing so. BPL offered them
jobs but only one accepted. It would be opposition to
BPL - they didn't work on Rabi either. Nor did
they do ~~much~~ gardening, then worked takes 10
minutes a day (I mean it - I measured
every inch of it).

One of the most interesting things is that by getting good P.R. consultants you can alter the record of history.

Incidentally at USP, the Rabi students always naturally joined the Leventese students & their association etc until the P.R. people told them they should join Fiji. So they join Fiji officially but still stay mainly with the Leventese.

All of them, including the Rostan's incidentally, are of very recent (i.e. post colonial) Leventese stock, as well as of pre-Leventese Leventese stock.

Much is made of the Rostan's religious leadership. Nothing is mentioned of ^{their} phenomenal personal greed - i.e. ~~religion~~ in relation to their fellow Banabans. That is a story in itself, as is their technique of leadership (they are to be seen the leaders). The Banaban case is presented as though there was only one. The less privileged Banabans have some other views.

By the way Banabans in Rabi don't live on such subsistence, they do & always have lived mainly on phosphate royalties.

In chapter 4 the terms "independence" and

"freedom" are used in ~~so~~ inconsistent ways. One could comment at length on this section. The reason I make good impression is that the Tuvaluans live there, it really is separate geographically and culturally (vastly more than Banaba) and Tuvaluans have never taken or want ~~to keep~~ another citizenship. Banabans are - at their request to Ratu Mara as Prime Minister - Fiji citizens. They do not want to give that up. What they want is Banaba as an "associated state" with Fiji. Naturally Kiribati is not going to go along with that. The Banabans hope (i) that the new section techniques will allow more phosphate to be extracted (ii) to lessen the island ~~to~~ a fishing base (iii) to leave the 200 mile EEZ.

Nauru is much bigger, has much more phosphate, and is a distinct people in a sense which Banaba is not. But Banaba is only 2500 people - not a very big nation.

On the basis of this case, PNG would be set independent as some hundreds of independent nations. I hope the Panguna and Ok Tedi peoples will be given their independence & that the PNG government won't take any of their copper royalties!

Anyway, there are just passing comments which we can discuss some time

Sincerely
