# SMOKE AS MIRROR: MARIJUANA, THE STATE, AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATION IN PACIFIC NEWSPAPERS<sup>1</sup>



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This article re-assesses the argument that newspapers promote modernist national identities. Reading coverage of marijuana in three Pacific Island states indicates that while the news media may constitute an imagined national community, they also serve other purposes. They may give voice to a morally ambiguous relationship between nation and state, in which the latter's sovereignty authors and authorizes the internal and external boundaries of the nation incompletely and without full guarantee. How newspapers shape national identity depends on the structure of state sovereignty in which they appear. (French Polynesia, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, newspapers, nation-state relations)

In Anderson's (1983) well-known thesis, the formation of national subjectivity derives from a secular concept of language with its basis in arbitrary rather than divine signs. The spread of secular language, in his view, gives rise to a particular concept of time that is then promoted by the development of mass media. Reading the newspaper every day, anonymous citizens come to take for granted (Benedict's trope is that they "imagine") that they are moving through a homogeneous empty-time together. They simultaneously read accounts of events that appear together only by virtue of their temporal coincidence. In Europe, this kind of national subjectivity depended on literacy and the spread of print capitalism. It was imitated throughout the colonial and postcolonial worlds, taking on as it did an ever more modular, or transferable, form. Anderson (1983:67) notes, "The 'nation' proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent. It became available for pirating by widely different, and sometimes unexpected, hands."

Billig (1995) subsequently developed a related idea about the discursive integration of the national subject. For Billig (1995:14), there are two kinds of nationalism: hot and banal.<sup>2</sup> The former, politically motivated, is extraordinary, fervent, and intermittent. The latter, particularly in older states, is part of a naturalized habitus that is strewn about daily life in ways that "contract . . . *the* centre of the universe . . . to the national borders" (Billig 1995:115). He offers

examples of traces of national identity that affirm its unity in routine ways. In newspaper mastheads, weather reporting, the home news, the sports page, and pronominal parochialisms, subtle expressions of discursive boundary setting address the national self as "here" and made up of "we," while implicitly distinguishing "us" from the foreign other. For both Anderson and Billig, the nation's voice comes across as a modernist fantasy in and through the print media. It is coherent, homogeneous, and inclusive. This article evaluates what may be called a modernist view of the relationship of newspapers to national identity in order to argue that several kinds exist, rather than just the modernist one.

To document this variability, we compared newspapers in a region of the postcolonial world, the Pacific Basin, where the nation-state relationship is incipient, but not in a uniform way. Colonies such as French Polynesia, West Papua, American Samoa, and others persist. The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands and the Republic of Palau are postcolonial states both governed under a compact of free association with the United States. There are also staunchly independent postcolonial states, of which Papua New Guinea is an exemplary case.

We do not analyze media representations of legitimate practices among or by a citizenry, but focus instead on newspaper stories about anomalous persons and commodities that circulate through the margins of the nation and its territory. For example, marijuana coverage in regional newspapers is representative of relations between Pacific states and their nations.<sup>3</sup> When seen through the prism of this drug, such news seems to constitute a modern, national reflexivity serving its universalizing projects, creating an imagined community, sustaining consensus, etc. However, such news can subvert the normative project of nationmaking. Depending on the structure of political sovereignty, the print media in the insular Pacific are discursive spaces in which national subjectivities are constructed and contested (Turner 1990).

#### CONTEMPORARY MEDIA AND THE NATION

Cass (2004) holds that the problems impeding Pacific media do not arise from foreign ownership, but from local political pressures, if not outright intimidation (see Singh and Prakash 2006; Duffield 2005; Robie 2004).<sup>4</sup> If there is an overall journalistic ethos in this region, it involves a unique combination of "second wave of development media" (Cass 2004:103) joined by a Western, liberal tradition of a free, watchdog press, and a social justice model pioneered by the Catholic Church. Indeed, since the 1990s, coverage of populist resistance in Pacific states has been persistent. There have been stories on the civil war in Bougainville in the 1990s, the renewal of tribal warfare, and rise of criminal youth gangs in urban Papua New Guinea beginning in the 1980s. The pro-democracy demonstrations in Tonga in 2005, the four coups in Fiji, ongoing guerilla warfare in West Papua, and the 2006 ethnic riots in Honiara, Solomon Islands include some, but by no means all, of the most sensational events. Statenation disarticulation, in short, is an ongoing theme in the regional media (Robie 2004).

With few exceptions (e.g., Babadzan 1988; Clark 1997; Jacobsen 1995), the literature in this region following Anderson (1983) and Billig (1995) have privileged normative, modernist constructions of the national citizen (Dauvergne 1998; Foster 1995; Hirsch 1990; Larmour 1998; Lawson 1996; Otto and Thomas 1997; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1998). Two studies that focused on the relationship between print media and the postcolonial nation (Foster 2002; Connell 2007) looked at advertisements in Papua New Guinea (PNG) newspapers and argued that they diffuse attributes and notions that are distinctive of national citizenship. "Commercial mass media... function as instruments for making an individualist definition of persons and bodies publicly visible in contemporary PNG" (Foster 2002:89). Similarly, the "People" column in the Fiji Times celebrated moral qualities of successful entrepreneurs (Connell 2007), implying that such individuals were modern. They had separated from their tribal or ethnic roots, lived in nuclear families, worked hard, overcame obstacles, took initiative, and were good Christians. They exemplified what a successful citizen and nation might act and look like. The modernist orientation of this column, Connell (2007:106) concluded, played a "small but influential role in (re)creating the nation."

While acknowledging the analytic value of this modernist view of the role and effects of the media on the postcolonial nation (see also Chanter 2002), in the discussion of marijuana coverage in the Pacific that follows, three contrasting images of the national citizen are at play. In colonial French Polynesia, while the state is cast melodramatically by the news media, the citizen is muted. Micronesian papers depict citizen and state in a relationship of mutual support, and in Papua New Guinean newspapers, representations of the citizen are both critical and supportive of the state.

No doubt, readers actively interpret what is in the press, and meaning production in mass communication generally is problematic rather than given (Spitulnik 1993; Silverstein 2000; Tsing 2003). While we offer brief suggestions about how media representations of marijuana are being assimilated by rural Papua New Guineans, for the most part we follow Anderson's (1983) and Billig's (1995) lead. Our analytical focus is not on reader response, but on images of the nation in newspapers. These accounts cover years 2003–2004, but also include a few significant stories reported in other years.

## MELODRAMA OF THE COLONIAL STATE IN FRENCH POLYNESIA

Organized under constitutional revisions in 2003 as a French Overseas Collectivity, French Polynesia maintains a local governing body. However, France retains control over military, police, the judicial system, tertiary education, monetary policy, defense, and foreign affairs. With representation in France, French Polynesia is governed as if part of the French state. Marijuana was reported to be a growing problem there and associated with juvenile crime. Distinctive about coverage of the drug in this French colony was the media's preoccupation with the state, as if the national subject had no voice or agency. In 2003, stories in Les Nouvelles de Tahiti adhered to a schema that delineated location, arrests made, amounts found, and so forth. Reports on large confiscations were illustrated with photographs. One short article about a series of raids that netted over one thousand plants, for example, featured a picture of five smiling gendarmes (police officers) sitting in front of a row of mature plants (Les Nouvelles 2003e). The agency of police officers figured prominently in narratives in which they were described as "hunting" (Les Nouvelles 2003f), or making "discoveries" (Les Nouvelles 2003b). One headline declared, "The Ninjas took their attack to marijuana" (Les Nouvelles 2003c:3). The slang designator, "Ninja," for the police would seem to cast the officials as an extraordinary paramilitary and foreign force.<sup>5</sup> The ninja image evokes the cinematic moment often celebrated in Pacific villages, where audiences "collectively cheer on their Ninja heroes and warn them of imminent danger" (Hahn 1994:8). But the main point is that while police in French Polynesia receive favorable attention, these government agents are shown to act alone, powerfully, confidently, and cheerful about their latest successes. The colonial state appears to administer the law effectively, without compromise or implicit or explicit expression of custody by the nation.

Another favored topic in the French Polynesian press involves searches made either at roadside checkpoints (*Les Nouvelles* 2003d, 2004a, 2004c) or during surprise raids on colleges and high schools (*Les Nouvelles* 2003a). Compared to other operations, these events received greater coverage, and longer articles, including numerous photos. The amounts seized, however, were comparatively small. For instance, a full-page story on "a control and delinquency prevention operation" (*Les Nouvelles* 2003a:4) uncovered only 40 grams of the drug. In other incidents, 95 grams (*Les Nouvelles* 2004c) and 51 grams (*Les Nouvelles* 2004a) were seized. In a similar operation at the Paul Gauguin High School and Tipaerui College, 2,700 students were searched (*Les Nouvelles* 2003a). Though explicitly meant to find marijuana, only 15 grams of cannabis and a knife were confiscated in three hours of searching. The police saw their effort as in support of headmasters. "Our presence is to aid their actions of training these youth, and these missions give us a chance to get to know the people training at college and high school" (*Les Nouvelles* 2003a). Ten photos, including the police plan for securing the building, were featured. Compared to the reporting in other parts of the Pacific, there was little consideration of those caught. If these stories privileged the state, despite highlighting what amounted to little more than ceremonial police actions, they silenced the national subject.

While portraying marijuana as a great problem in French Polynesia, recognition of its relatively mild effects was acknowledged by state officials who aim to rehabilitate the bodies of citizens. The head of Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Services placed alcohol and marijuana in the same category (Les Nouvelles 2003b). Not only were they part of the same battle, she asserted, but the two were quite often used together, making it impossible to treat them separately or differently. A proposal to prescribe treatment instead of incarceration for consumption-related arrests was broached by the Procureur General de Polynesie, Francois Deby, and the Procureur General de la Republique, Jean Bianconi (Les Nouvelles, 2004b). The former suggested that therapy would be preferable to any sanction, as nontrafficking offenses were primarily a health concern. The Procureur General de la Republique made similar statements, noting that "All the people who smoke . . . [marijuana] are quite passive" (Les Nouvelles 2004b). As with the accounts of police actions, coverage excluded the voices of present and past users, medical professionals, or other citizens of the nation.

In French Polynesian newspapers, the colonial state abides as the authoritative, sole guarantor of the moral community. Marijuana coverage thus distinguishes its legitimate offices by name and quotation in an unequivocal, audibly paternalistic register. By contrast, the citizenry are given little voice, except implicitly as compromising the legal integrity of the state through production and consumption practices. Though largely muted by the press, the nation is seen as adhering to the state's authority. In this sense, it might be said that the stereotypical, modernist state, with its legal apparatus of enforcement and spectacle remains legible and operative, albeit in a rather melodramatic form (Brookes 1976). In the American protectorates, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the Republic of Palau, marijuana-related articles narrate a slightly more problematic, if somewhat less bathetic, relation-ship between the sovereignty of the state and the nation.

## MARIJUANA AND THE CONSENSUAL NATION IN THE MICRONESIAN PRESS

Media reports in the CNMI and the Republic of Palau also foregrounded actions of the police, but the nation differed from its absence in the French Polynesian press.<sup>6</sup> Unlike French Polynesia, both retain greater autonomy in local administration and likewise have reduced representation within the United States. Differences also extend to the media. First, in contrast to French Polynesian press, the particular marijuana-related crime was, and the criminals were, discriminated by age and gender. In 2003, the Marianas Variety reported on 19 individuals between the ages of 10 and 63 (most were males in their 20s and 30s) who were charged with trafficking (five cases), possession (seven cases), or cultivation (six cases). One woman, who was charged with marijuana possession in these cases, was also charged with possession of methamphetamine (de la Torre 2003g). The *Palau Horizon* reported on fewer arrests during this same year, though 40 non-arrest violations had occurred by September (Concepcion 2003h). Both newspapers located the arrest, the name of the offender, the quantity and value of the seizure, and what legal actions were to be taken against the accused. Rather than being given no face, the nation was recognized in the media via the enforcement and classificatory abilities of the state.

In Palau, a 2003 storyline featured six articles tracing the acquisition of two dogs by the state's new Drug Detector Dog Unit. Each one concerned a different aspect of their arrival: two articles were on the training of officers and dogs (Concepcion 2003b, 2003c), another described their report for duty (Concepcion 2003d), a fourth reported on a test run at the customs office (Concepcion 2003e), another highlighted the unit's role in searching on behalf of the postal service (Concepcion 2003f), and a last piece celebrated the unit's first arrest at the airport (Concepcion 2003g). Not only did the presence of the Dog Unit storyline highlight the policing of Palau's borders, but it served to warn potential offenders of the state's new powers of canine detection and suggested that its ability to regulate illegal traffic was not static but becoming more effective.

The possibility for export is apparent in quantities reported seized. The *Palau Horizon* published a front-page story on September 5, 2003 announcing the seizure of "300 kilos marijuana" (Concepcion 2003a). A photo of a boat carrying some of the confiscated plants dominated the page. The state was represented as being able to monitor its borders and prevent international circulation (*Marianas Variety* 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). The press also reported on the confiscation of a small bag for personal use (de la Torre 2003b) and less than one-half pound taken from a minor at the Guam International Airport (de la Torre 2003a). In addition to the celebration of the state's ability to control its ports, these articles

clearly took local geography for granted, thus implying a collective knowledge of the national landscape.

Moreover, many raids were said to have relied on tips from the public that seemed to snowball, with the publicity from one leading to others. The Marianas *Variety* featured an illustrated, front-page article on August 14<sup>th</sup> in which two "Special Investigation Section agents', wearing t-shirts that proclaimed 'Green Harvest'," appear standing in front of confiscated marijuana plants (de la Torre 2003d). Following tips, they had raided two plantations, earned the commendation of various superiors, but were still searching for the suspected owners. Additional tips, the Marianas Variety reported, led to raids of three other plantations where some 50 plants were found growing (de la Torre 2003f). In October, a "concerned citizen" revealed the location of 223 mature plants growing on Peleliu (Concepcion 2003i). Members of the nation were thus portrayed together with the police as a team; the nation was depicted as so loyal as to be willing to betray kin. An aunt of one young man was reported to have turned him in for growing seven plants in his room (Dass 2003c). Other accounts further emphasized the significant role of nation-police relations. A 34-year-old "farmer" was sentenced for trafficking after a "citizen informed" the police that the man was "selling marijuana to children at a bus station" (de la Torre 2003e). In May 2003, a schoolboy was reported to have informed a teacher that a fellow student possessed marijuana and "was showing [it] to . . . students on campus" (de la Torre 2003c). These articles contrasted a rational citizen/kinsman, who upheld and supported the state over and above primordial ties, with those who use and traffic drugs. In accordance with government policy, the former are anonymous, and in amenity stand for the nation; the latter, who contest the state's authority, are specifically named. While not quite at the level of Billig's (1995) hot nationalism, the representation of activism in these stories surely contrasts with the mute citizen found in the French Polynesian press.

This modernist image of the national citizen extends beyond "incidence" reports to stories suggesting that whatever ethical shadow consumption might cast upon the nation, state officials should be without blemish. *The Marianas Variety* reported that five of the 56 state employees randomly tested for drugs had positive results (Eugenio 2003). In February, an opposition party member accused a prospective government consultant, Don Farrell, of failing a prehire drug test (Dass 2003a, 2003b). Mr. Farrell denied the allegation and challenged his accuser to a public duel of drug testing. Neither took the proposed test and Mr. Farrell was offered the job. At the same time, the nominee for Attorney General came under similar scrutiny (Sabuco 2003). More than regulating government employees, such testing was also seen as setting a standard for the citizens. A few years earlier, the *Palau Horizon* had reported that all 14 senators took drug tests, though it was not required. According to Sandra

Pierantozzi, the senate floor leader, they wanted to set "an example. I myself can't ask anybody to undergo a drug test," she went on, "if I can't do it first" (Sayson 2000).

In marijuana coverage in Micronesia, the state's modernist project defending the integrity of its borders, honoring a rational citizenry, and the efficacy of its police—was extolled and the drug was condemned as a threat to the health of the body politic. However, this selfsame discourse might also be interpreted as ambiguating the nation-state relationship, opposing its citizens against each other through tips, implicating state officials as consumers, and so forth. But this implication is neither voiced nor suggested by the media. On the contrary, the CNMI appears in a mutually supportive relationship with the nation in these articles.

#### MARIJUANA AND THE UNCIVIL NATION IN THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA PRESS

The independent nation of Papua New Guinea is cast very differently than in the French Polynesian or the Micronesian newspapers. The Papua New Guinea media represented official views that marijuana cultivation and consumption has spread virulently since the early 1990s. According to many accounts, marijuana grown as a cash crop was widespread throughout the highlands of central New Guinea (Harris 1988; Ivarature 2000). Robyn Sela, a reporter writing in the *Post Courier* (2001b), cited the following staggering statistics from a 1998 study done by the National Narcotics Bureau (McDonald and Winmarang 1999).

| PROVINCE          | PROFIT<br>(in millions of Kina) | CULTIVATORS   |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Chimbu            | 23.5                            | 35,500        |
| Eastern Highlands | 20.0                            | 30,000–50,000 |
| Western Highlands | 15.6                            | 15,000–44,000 |
| Madang            | 5.4                             | 15,000        |

 Table

 Marijuana Profits and Number of Cultivators by Province

The provincial and cultivator cells (Table) suggest a relationship of citizens to the state that recalls Simmel's (1950) notion of the stranger as a contradictory unity of sociological belonging, positioned in spatial proximity, and not belonging, positioned in spatial distance, to his territorially corporate group.

Indeed, the marijuana cultivators, or their kin, own the land "not only in the physical, but also in the figurative sense of a life-substance which is fixed . . . in an ideal point of the social environment" (Simmel 1950:401). Here, they are classified not merely as residents, but as provincial citizens of Papua New Guinea. Illicit cultivation leaves them "inorganically appended" to the nation (Simmel 1950:403), simultaneously estranged from its soil while remaining part of it. The table portrays Papua New Guineans as citizen-strangers in their own nation-state.

According to press reports cited by a police commissioner in 2001, druguse was "rife" in the cities of Port Moresby, Lae, Goroka, and Mt. Hagen, which were "full of addicts . . . [who made up] a whole new generation of semi-conscious human beings" (*The Independent* 2001). Assistant Police Commissioner and commander of the National Capitol/Central Province, Geoffrey Valei, described the situation in Papua New Guinea as a perilous "home-made gun and marijuana culture" (Puton 2002). In 2004, a distraught editorial appeared in *The National* that concluded with a plea that the country ought not to end up like Australia, which the U.N. had reported to be one of the largest marijuana consumers in the world (*National* 2004). Despite the public gnashing of teeth, marijuana users were not assigned to a non-category of wild pigs and dogs, to which morality might not apply. They were not othered, invalidated as a completely separate enemy (e.g., inhuman or waste matter). The users were still considered citizens, living in a nation-state commensurable with the ex-colonial power.

Coverage of trafficking did not portray a secure infrastructure or a regulated, internal territory from which the nation might gain confidence through the state's achievements; it revealed an informal economy that was not about to be brought to heel. Highlanders, it was reported, were being lured away from coffee production and sales to smuggle marijuana by air, land, and sea to coastal ports such as Wewak, Madang, and Lae, or to the Gulf and Western provinces (*Post-Courier* 2003b). Marijuana was also alleged to be flowing freely on roads into Port Moresby from nearby Goilala and Mekeo villages (*Post-Courier* 2003d). After a huge seizure in 2004, Peter Taiang, a Police Commander, sent an appeal to these communities to "help police in reporting unfamiliar faces in their villages" (*Post-Courier* 2004d). While these articles take knowledge of national geography for granted, they also make the obvious point that lucrative production was being carried on by citizen-strangers against and despite the state.

Marijuana traffic was also reported to be moving through the New Guinea islands. According to West New Britain Chief Inspector, Tom Uapipi, ships were being "saturated . . . with packets of drugs in the hope that a shipment can get through, . . . there [being] an oversupply in Lae and the Highlands with desperate growers and dealers giving out drugs on consignment to anybody who will take

the risk of carrying them past Kimbe" (Post Courier 2002a). In an address to Pilapila primary school graduation, Uapipi named several villages located near the provincial capital of East New Britain as distribution points. He alleged that young graduates or school-leavers—as drop-outs are called in Papua New Guinea—from these communities obtained the drug directly from Rabaul port, Rabaul being the second biggest center for marijuana trafficking outside Goroka in the Eastern Highlands. Anderson (1983:167) points out that census-taking and map-making diffuse state sovereignty, as they did in colonial Indonesia and the Philippines, by subjecting people and territory to a project of totalizing classification. But spatial transitions may have collective, moral significance in addition to the statutory ones of states (Van Gennep 1960). Geography, in other words, may convey the solidarity of the nation within the state. Instead of stories of legitimate border-crossings (e.g., of airport arrivals of dignitaries or businessmen bearing luggage, or heralded technological cargo, etc.), marijuana coverage raises an ambiguous flag and sense of place. Absent here are the drug detector dogs of Palau and the "ninjas" of French Polynesia. Instead of a logo of sovereignty over a frontier or a sentimental evocation of the homeland as a hallowed site of the nation and its extraordinary history, in marijuana coverage, imposters smuggle contraband across boundaries they ignore.

At the same time as marijuana-related articles in Papua New Guinea newspapers reflected the power of the state by detailing seizures, convictions, and official efforts, such as the donation by the national telephone service of free phone lines to assist Port Moresby police in drug-related surveillance (*The Independent* 2001), the press was intrigued by how drugs were concealed. In 2003, two men were arrested at Jackson's Airport in Port Moresby carrying two large suitcases. They had packed the drugs in vegetables to hide the smell that evidently remained unmistakable (*Post-Courier* 2003c). In two other large seizures, one in Port Moresby and the other in Madang, the *Post-Courier* reported that the drugs were hidden in sweet potato bags (Yiprukaman 2004; *Post-Courier* 2004a). In the Highlands, the Mt. Hagen police confiscated an eight kilogram bag of marijuana addressed to a nun. A man, a regular customer of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) air cargo, was arrested. The drugs, police said, were hidden in a suspicious looking peanut bag (*Post-Courier* 2001a).

Recall the prominent argument that the circulation of the commodity-form serves the modernist project of diffusing a universalizing mode of thought (Foster 2002; Handler 1988; LiPuma 1995). Through mass-consumption practices in particular, both nation and citizen come to be thought of as discrete, neutral, impersonal objects, like the goods they buy and own from a mode of production that is objectified and independent of the consumer. There are in effect two processes that take place. In the one, commodity consumption is viewed as a "training ground" (Foster 1995:177) for a mode of thought that facilitates belonging to the universalized mode of thought demanded by citizenship in a nation. In the other, participation in the marketplace directly attaches people to the nation. But the dissimulated commodity form represented in marijuana exchange, through smuggling and camouflage, suggests a different image of the nation. Rather than objectified, the nation or citizen is not what it appears. Consumer capitalism provides a model for thinking about national identity: a person can come to see himself and the nation as a kind of thing owned or possessed in a universalized, rather than parochial or primordial way, like a commodity produced by a foreign alter. Newspaper coverage of marijuana capitalism entails a different concept for the citizen-subject. In New Britain, a man on a ship docked at Kimbe was arrested for having parcels of marijuana taped to his arms, legs, and body. The drugs were reported to have been purchased in Lae for 300 Kina with a street value of about 18,000 Kina (Post-Courier 2002b). Rather than being anonymous and legal, the citizen-subject, as well as the nation, are imagined as personal and embodied. Transacted as it is by ruse and chicanery in an illegitimate but profitable market, marijuana traffic constructs things and persons, not as bounded and tangible, but as illusory. The drug and its transactors are attributed qualities, odors, and identifiers they do not possess. And the nation thus becomes a labile, clandestine invention.

In contrast to claims that link marijuana use to crime, few such cases were reported in the Pacific media that we reviewed. The Papua New Guinea press, however, provides several exceptions. A nine-year-old girl and her grandmother were raped and murdered by six men in Chimbu Province, the *Post-Courier* reported in 2004. The newspaper (*Post-Courier* 2004c) concluded that the men were high on marijuana when they committed the crime. An East New Britain man, aged 40, appeared in court on murder charges, his crime committed while high on marijuana (*Post-Courier* 2004b). Another man was reported to have been speared, allegedly for refusing to smoke marijuana and drink homebrew with friends (Matrom 2004). In these stories, the citizenry were not imbued with the modern virtue of self-control. Instead, what is represented is an uncivil society: irrational, antisocial, and outside state control.

Simultaneously, however, youth and community leaders, including state officials, were also reported to engage in collective acts of moral renewal during which they took vows of self-discipline. Youth swore to stop consuming marijuana and homebrewed alcohol, and often turned in guns to officials while doing so. Ten youth from Kurumul village in the Western Highlands Province surrendered home brewing kits and marijuana plants to police and swore to forego future consumption (*Post-Courier* 2002c). In the Southern Highlands Province, Purenda and Iwanda villagers gave up weapons and marijuana plants to police during two rallies that had been organized by students, community leaders, women, and the churches. People were said to want normalcy and a restoration

of government services (*Post-Courier* 2003a). Several months later, youth from Tambul and Nebiliga villages in the Western Highlands Province also promised to change. They would no longer steal, would stop smoking marijuana, and would convert to Seventh-Day Adventism. They said they were going to do so because they wanted to promote economic development and serve the community out of concern for future generations (*Wantok* 2003a). A subsequent youth group in the same region vowed to stop smoking, uprooted plants, and handed them over to police. In a ceremony, the youth signed a declaration under the approving eye of Pastor Appa Poka, who was said to have persuaded them to do so, in some cases after more than ten years of drug use (*Wantok* 2003b).

Coverage of such acts of moral renewal portrayed the collective redemption of male youth (Dinnen 1995). These articles construed a constituency of men reaching out to the state rather than vice versa. In a way, their efforts might be seen as an attempt to redeem the nation. But the moral high ground is located in them, and perhaps in Christianity, rather than in the legal or symbolic institutions of Papua New Guinea. This agency might as well stand for the ambiguous character of the postcolonialism in this part of the Pacific. Here, the nation is not "adequately manifested" by the state (Weber 1958:176). The relationship between nation and state in Papua New Guinea remains incomplete, an irreducible contradiction rather than merely degenerate.

Having differentiated marijuana coverage in French Polynesia, Palau, CNMI, and Papua New Guinea, we next consider how such reporting is locally understood in Papua New Guinea. The media representations of marijuana commerce and consumption in village life suggest that newspaper articles do reflect attitudes about the nation.

#### COVERAGE OF MARIJUANA IN RURAL PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Living along the Upper Bulolo River, Biangai speakers inhabit seven villages and other small rural enclaves. Their history with colonial gold-miners in the 1920s and the uneven development of mineral resources today shape their desires and hopes for a better life (Halvaksz 2006a). By the late 1990s, Biangai had largely given up on the state as a guarantor of their advancement, turning instead to multinational mining companies and non-governmental organizations. They are strangers within the confines of the postcolonial state. What they envision to be true development is always held in check.

Marijuana is not a novel commodity for Biangai and their neighbors (Halvaksz 2006b, 2007). Their encounter with it resembles the newspaper coverage of the drug reviewed above. It is smoked secretly by some, and some men are known to profit from its trafficking in the local economy. Local leaders

deride its use and publically chastise users, and village youth have both grown it and then forsaken it in public ceremony.

During fieldwork (2000–2002 and 2005), press accounts of national events, including marijuana-related dealings, were the source of much discussion. While Biangai living some distance from town do not regularly read the national papers, a few do as they circulate its pages to be used in rolling local tobacco. More often, however, Biangai access the news through retellings in front of the storefronts of Wau or in the local marketplace. Like all media narratives, these travel back to the village where they are retold, and these retellings offer insights into how narratives are made locally meaningful. One example illustrates our larger thesis.

Newspapers have long interested Biangai. In one locally well known incident, some Winima villagers took refuge in the village of Elauru during the early days of colonial contact (late 1920s). Reportedly after having killed a fellow Winima villager, they had fled retaliation by kinsmen of the deceased. After Elauru sheltered the accused, Winima sent a copy of a recently introduced newspaper (perhaps one of the pre-World War II local presses), whose ink was said to be black and red. This seemed to the Elauru villagers that the colonial government knew of the violence that had been committed: the black ink represented the perpetrators and the red ink represented the blood. According to the story as told today, Elauru surrendered their captives, one of whom was reportedly killed in retribution for their initial crime.

Contemporary encounters with the media draw more from content than form. In an account retold in Elauru in 2001, the story of a once successful drug dealer caught by the state became the subject of much discussion. Referenced as coming from a recent newspaper, the story had become scant on details by the time it reached the village. A man had been caught in Hagen after many years of trading marijuana. He was older and had acquired some wealth, including a house and a Toyota Land Cruiser. That he was caught, and thus subject to the news article, was not what interested Elauru villagers on this occasion. Instead, they were impressed by his long-time success at avoiding arrest and getting rich. Both points expressed their critique of the state for failing to enforce its laws and for not providing broader economic opportunities. The citizen-subject's displeasure with the state on these points mirrors the press critiques of the same.

Such stories also lead to development fantasies, which are also influenced by the media (Halvaksz 2007). Young men discussing the story imagined how they would carry out a similar enterprise and how successful they would be. When pressed about the fact that the man was caught, they recounted in detail how drugs can be hidden (in produce, such as peanuts and coffee), where they would sell it, how they would transport it throughout the country, reiterating the details found in the Papua New Guinea news stories discussed above. These narratives

had certainly filtered through and afforded them an opportunity to view themselves outside the state. Their discussions did not occur in the presence of a stack of newspapers. Their discussion highlights how these news stories were successfully rendered to have local meaning. The young men constructed the nation as the state's alter; critical of its role in economic development and law enforcement. In this manner, the media both unified a national imaginary, even if based on illicit behavior, and formulated resistance to the state.

#### CONCLUSION

This article compared newspaper coverage of marijuana-related crime within the insular Pacific, and how such stories are localized in one part of Papua New Guinea. This was done in order to develop a more varied analytical relationship between print media and representations of the nation. Acknowledging that media are not unmediated accounts, but are themselves embedded representations with their own ideological commitment, we ask: What constructions of this relationship, other than the modernist one privileged by followers of Anderson (1983) and Billig (1995), did we find in marijuana coverage in this region?

In colonial French Polynesia, an image of the state appeared that was relatively undeterred by the presence of this illicit drug in the body politic. The national subject was largely silenced while the former's legal arm—its Ninjas—was cast as relatively unambiguous, if perhaps melodramatic, heroes. In other words, crime presented a context in which media expressed national pride in the successes of the state's regulatory efforts. The adherence of the nation to the state is presumed in the press.

In the neo-colonial Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Republic of Palau, the press portrayed a related, but perhaps more actively consensual, relationship between state and nation. Police were depicted working with their dynamic canine unit, wearing "Green Harvest" t-shirts, and benefitting from tipsters informing on kith and kin. This implies that readers, to some extent at least, buy into the nation, whereas in French Polynesia the press did not find reference to such voices necessary.

By contrast, marijuana coverage in Papua New Guinea suggested the existence of a carnivalesque economy practiced by a transgressive polity. The unitary national subject, otherwise expressed in the sports sections, editorials, advertising, and correspondence in the newspapers of this country, was challenged in its drug-related reporting. Marijuana coverage exposed the limits of legitimate, civil society, foregrounding a fragmented, masked body politic and its insubordinate citizenry. Articles portray normative gaps in the nation-state relationship that will not be resolved if only marijuana cultivation, consumption, and trafficking were eliminated. They give voice to a national subject who is not restrained by the force of law but is willing to violate the state, its market, and borders. Such possibilities are seen in Biangai fantasies of illicit trade. While not fully engaged in the circulation of the drug, through the discussion of media stories Biangai imagine the possibilities: a specifically local economy operated by subjects in opposition to the state.

An important variable in understanding these differences is the degree to which states are independent, and the degree of centralization they have achieved and may sustain. Media coverage of marijuana, as an illicit challenge to state sovereignty, seems to capture these differences in ways that other narratives of the nation do not. To an extent, the French Polynesian and Micronesian press thus become implicated in support of the state. Here, a distinct image emerges of the "citizen," or the "general public," and of leadership concerned with setting a good example. Lacking in the Papua New Guinea press were the numerous images of the police smiling before a large haul, or stories about national leaders taking a stand against consumption and circulation. Instead of pre-eminent national voices, local leadership and the vows of community members foreswearing their sin and ruin found expression in the Papua New Guinea press. While apparently a celebration of state power, reports of the mass surrender of guns, drugs, or liquor seemed to suggest an ongoing dialogue instead of a consensus about citizenship.

While the neighbors of growers in Palau appeared to co-operate with police to carry out the state's objectives, police in Papua New Guinea were portrayed as operating without help from the citizenry. The media did not report them doing so, at least. Papua New Guinea reporting did not glorify a virtuous citizenry committed to nationalism, be it hot or banal. Likewise, events reported there suggested cannabis use to be a form of resistance, even as officials profess their disgust for it. This attitude was lent a bit of documentation in the miniethnography of newspaper coverage we discussed, where reporting expressed Biangai critiques of the state.

If the nation, as Anderson and Billig argued, consists in narratives its citizens learn and adhere to that may tell of triumphant origins of a way of life, we suggest there may be national counter-narratives as well (Bhabha 1990), what Nairn has called its Janus face (1981:319). Perhaps media coverage of marijuana in some locales, together with stories about class injustice, ethnic or racial conflict, military, or even athletic defeat, constitute a negative genre of the national narrative. Such counter-narratives express how the nation may not be the political-legal, moral, and libidinal center of legitimacy its officials and citizenry desire it be. Instead, counter-narratives disclose gaps and suggest metaphors of disjunction and dysfunction in the relationship between the imagined community and the state.

By focusing on marijuana coverage in newspapers in three kinds of Pacific states, we have shown that the view that solely affords the mass media a modernist role in nation-making does not account for the case of journalism in Papua New Guinea, but does seem to fit in the French Polynesian and the Micronesian press in different ways.

#### NOTES

1. This project was initially funded by the College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota, as part of the Graduate Research and Partnership Program. All translations from the French are our own.

2. For studies of the relationship between newspaper coverage and banal national identity see Bishop and Jaworski (2003), Brookes (1999), Law (2001), and Yumul and Oskirimli (2000).

3. For a review of marijuana in the Pacific, see Halvaksz and Lipset (2006).

4. In Micronesia, however, *The Marianas Variety* and *The Palau Horizon* are both locally owned, but the major print media in the insular Pacific are under foreign control (Robie 1995). 5. "Ninja" has been used in other Pacific postcolonies. In Samoa, it is the name of gangs (*Pacific Islands Report* 1998). In Papua Indonesia, stories of ninja-like riders on motorcycles serve as "flexible symbols" that fit with acts of state violence against indigenes (Butt 2005).

6. On marijuana in Micronesia, see Tseng and Young (1981), Larson (1987), Oneisom (1992), Pinhey (1997).

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