

## Protection and Promotion of Culture at the Community Level: A Case Study of Rotumans

Kylie Anderson  
with  
Feskatoa Isimeli\*

### Abstract

*In the Pacific, human rights debates often focus on political and economic discussions, leaving issues related to culture and language aside. Yet the potential loss of language and culture has been identified as being of great concern to many within the region. This concern is also apparent on an international level with a growing number of international declarations and other documents focusing on the area. This article focuses on the attempts of one community – the Rotumans – to ‘safeguard’ language and culture. The paper also reviews the compatibility of these efforts with various international agreements.*

### Introduction

The preservation of culture, tradition, and language has long been a concern for many minority communities around the world. On the international level the importance of promoting and protecting minorities has been recognised in declarations such as the UN’s *Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*<sup>1</sup>, while the need to ‘safeguard’ or protect culture is behind

---

\* The authors wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for suggestions and feedback.

<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution 47/ 135 of 18 December 1992. It should be recognised that the actual definition of what constitutes a ‘minority’ is not

the recommendations of the UNESCO’s *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*<sup>2</sup> (herein referred to as the Recommendation). While neither of these are legally binding, it can be argued that by virtue of being members of the United Nations and United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), member states have an obligation to uphold the principles of these organisations and make policies designed to help minority communities to protect and promote culture and language.

While emphasizing the role of the Government, the UNESCO Recommendation also makes clear the role of the community and individuals: ‘(f)olklore, as a form of cultural expression, must be safeguarded by and for the group (familial, occupational, national, regional, religious, ethnic, etc.) whose identity it expresses’ (UNESCO, 1989).

The importance of the role of the community has also been recognised in other UNESCO documents. The *Language Vitality and Endangerment* report asserts that, in regards to language preservation, ‘(i)n the end, it is the speakers, not outsiders, who maintain or abandon languages’ (UNESCO, 2003).

This paper focuses on the steps taken by one minority community – the Rotumans – in one UNESCO member state – Fiji – to protect and promote language and culture through their own initiatives.

While protection and promotion of culture has been identified as part of the mandate of the Fiji Government<sup>3</sup>, it is fair to say that, in regard to the Rotuman language and culture, most of the initiatives have come from the people themselves. The Rotuman community has, in general, been particularly committed to protect, or ‘safeguard’, many aspects of the Rotuman culture. In the first instance this article serves to highlight some of the more recent activities as examples of community initiatives. The second part of the article, using the framework of the relevant UNESCO Recommendations, analyses the success the community has had in both protecting and promoting their culture within Fiji, and to emphasise the importance of community based initiatives in protecting and promoting minority language and culture in Fiji. The paper focuses on two different types of initiatives; those that are Suva based (in both participation and focus) vis-à-vis those that are Suva based but have made considerable progress in fortifying the links between Rotumans in Suva

---

stipulated in any UN document, including this. See Minority Rights Group International (no date).

<sup>2</sup> Adopted by UNESCO General Conference, 25<sup>th</sup> session, Paris, 15 November 1989.

<sup>3</sup> An example of this is Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2002: 231-240.

and in Rotuma. It must be noted that, within the Rotuman community, there are many examples of contributions from both individuals and groups.<sup>4</sup> Due to space constraints, this paper cannot make note of every example of Rotuman cultural endeavour (of which there have been many) for 2004. For this reason, the case studies selected are to serve as examples only.

### The Meaning of Culture

Prior to reviewing the recent action taken by the Rotuman community, it is necessary to define what is meant by both 'culture' and tradition as this has often been a source of contention. For the purpose of this paper, folklore and culture are taken to have the same meaning. The UNESCO document defines folklore as:

...the totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts (UNESCO, 1989).

This definition is compatible with those outlined by members and observers of the Rotuman community (Parke, 2003). It is often argued that culture is dynamic, changing over time depending on the needs of the community (Inia, 2001). The impact of migration and other developments often cause groups to change certain customs and traditions. While it is often difficult for groups to collectively decide what the defining forces are of their identity, it is clear that certain elements – such as oral traditions, language and handicraft – are of some importance.<sup>5</sup> Examples of 'cultural identifiers' for the Rotuman community are outlined in the following section of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> The *Noa'ia Mauri* website is a good example. Some initiatives have come from individuals. Iisapei Inia and Vilisoni Hereniko, for example, have been instrumental in bringing Rotuman culture to the fore.

<sup>5</sup> Part of the difficulty can be attributed to the notion that culture is dynamic and changes as a result of varying influences. Not all of these changes are desirable. Nor, it should be mentioned, is the safeguarding of all practices. While an important aspect of any discussion on culture, it is not within the scope to discuss these issues, which, in keeping with the UNESCO declarations, are for the members of the group to decide upon.

### Rotumans in Fiji: A Minority Community

In the Pacific Island region, Fiji serves as a particularly good example of a state trying to balance diverse cultural groups. Within the state, the identification of minority groups has been problematic, with many groups laying claim to the term 'minority'.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it is possible to determine 'minority' in a number of ways (economic, political, numerical) and it is true that there are many groups in Fiji that deserve consideration. However, arguments about the legitimacy of claims aside, the Rotuman people, comprising some 10,000 people (or 1.25% of Fiji's population) is an example of one minority group that is generally accepted as a 'special' case within Fiji (see, for example, Lal, 2001).

The 'uniqueness' of the Rotumans (Irava, 1977: 157) has been recognised by the Fiji Government in a number of key policy documents. Two laws have been enacted specifically on Rotuma, the *Rotuma Act*, and the *Rotuma Lands Act*. More recently, the government reiterated the uniqueness of Rotumans in the 20-year *Development Plan (2001-2020) for the Enhancement of Participation of Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans in the Socio-economic Development of Fiji*. The *Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands* recognises the position of the Rotuman community, and the right of the Rotuman people as a group; s2(6)(d) of the Constitution provides the Rotuman people the right to governance through their separate administration systems. Further recognition is exemplified by the inclusion of three Rotuman representatives in the Bose Levu Vakaturaga (Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs), the presence of a designated seat for the Rotuman community in the Senate of Fiji and the continuing existence of the 'Rotuman Communal Roll' which not only serves as recognition of the community but also entitles the Rotumans to one seat in the House of Representatives.

Much of this recognition is related to the history of Rotuma's inclusion in the Fiji group of islands. Rotuma was annexed by the British colonial administrators of Fiji in 1881. When Fiji achieved independence in 1970, Rotuma was decolonised as part of the Fiji Island group. Linguistically and culturally, Rotumans are different from indigenous Fijians, or other groups of Pacific Islanders.<sup>7</sup> While the total population of Rotumans

<sup>6</sup> Ratuva (2002: 18-9) identified 13 minority groups in Fiji outside of the two main communities. The argument about minorities is extremely precarious in Fiji. In 2004, Fiji's then Opposition Leader Mick Beddoes, in a lecture to first year students at the University of the South Pacific, made several references to the 'minorities within the minority community'.

<sup>7</sup> There are numerous published works on this; for a useful guide, see Parke (2003).

in Fiji is slightly under 10,000, according to the last census 2,580 (approximately 0.33% of the population) live on Rotuma Island (Howard and Rensel, 2001). Most Rotumans in Fiji live in the greater Suva area (extending to Nausori) although there are also large communities in Lautoka and Nadi. Migration to Fiji was for a range of reasons including employment and education (Irava, 1977).

The movement of people from Rotuma to other places has had an impact on the culture and language of Rotumans. Howard and Rensel (2001) note that 'more than three-fourths' of the world's population of Rotumans live outside of Fiji. Such migration has resulted in fears about the potential loss of Rotuman language and culture (Irava, 1977). Irava noted that migration to Fiji and elsewhere had 'resulted in changes in the value system, attitudes and behaviour, and culture' of the Rotuman community, and concluded that there was potential for the 'identity of Rotumans as an ethnic group...(to)...be completely lost' (1977: 159-60).

Almost three decades on, this is still a concern for the Rotuman community. Earlier this year Reverend Dr. Langi, then General Secretary of the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma and subsequent its President, noted the changes in the behaviour and dress of young Rotumans from the island when they migrate to Fiji as well as the gradual loss of identity: 'One very important fibre of this loss of identity is the language and culture; if we are not careful we will soon become a cultureless community having lost our identity as well' (Langi, 2004: 2).

There are factors other than migration that can contribute to loss of culture and identity. The UNESCO report on *Language Vitality and Endangerment* (2003) has recognised that, for communities whose language is not dominant in the society they live in, there may be little or no incentive to use the language or to pass it on to their children. It is also the case that, in societies where there is more than one community asking for recognition, as in Fiji, it is possible for some minority groups to be marginalized irrespective of government policy. Despite the provisions for the Rotuman community in the Constitution and government policy, it has been argued, for example by Fiji's Chief Justice Daniel Fatiaki, that on a national level, the community was 'much ignored, much misrepresented and misunderstood' (Elbourne, 2004: 3). These comments were made at the opening of the Pacific Island Culture and Arts Foundation (PICAF) Rotuma Fine Arts and Fashion Exhibition. He applauded the Exhibition as a means to 'revive a people and culture' (author's own notes, 2004).

It is this lack of awareness of the community's culture and language (and the potential ramifications of this) that have led, at least in part, to the actions taken by members of the community. As already noted, there

are many community based initiatives that have helped draw attention to the Rotuman people and culture. This, in itself, serves as a protective mechanism by creating awareness amongst the people of Fiji about Rotuman culture and history. Irava has written on the awareness of Rotuman culture amongst Fiji-based Rotumans and their willingness to maintain cultural links:

The Rotumans form an enclave in Fiji, easily distinguishable by their language, nomenclature and race. This is a source of pride, for Rotumans possess a keen awareness of their uniqueness. The desire to maintain cultural obligations has helped to establish a cohesive relationship which tends to promote further the sense of "Rotumaness" (Irava, 1977: 157).

Howard and Rensel (2001) have also commented on this, arguing that the size of Rotuman enclaves in Fiji makes it possible to generate groupings of sufficient size to support virtually any cultural practice; this can reinforce one's sense of identity as a Rotuman. The authors note that some of the most important aspects of Rotuman culture, for those who have migrated, include language, dance, cultural artifacts or 'handicraft' (for example, mats, and the garlands known as *tefui*), and the ability to discuss genealogical connections as well as politics, events, and personalities on Rotuma. The latter indicates the importance of maintaining links between the Rotuman communities in Rotuma and elsewhere. The need for Rotuman people, and others, to engage in 'cultural' activities with other members of the community is an extremely important factor in promoting and protecting their culture and language; Howard and Rensel refer to this as 'social bonding'.

In 2004 there had been a number of initiatives that serve as good examples of the desire to continue such linkages. It is from such case studies that this paper will draw its evidence.

### **Suva Based Initiatives**

The PICAF Rotuma Fine Arts and Fashion Exhibit held in June 2004 was particularly popular, creating much media publicity and, accordingly, helping to create awareness about Rotuman culture and the community at large. Opening with a re-enactment of the creation and settlement of Rotuma the performance incorporated both traditional and contemporary elements of culture. A Rotuman dance known as the *tautoga* was performed and many of the performers wore costumes and tattoos, the designs of which were based on the illustrations of the French explor-

ers who had arrived in Rotuma in 1772. ('Impressions...', 2004: 14-5). Additionally, the exhibit served as a showcase for the work of young Rotuman artists and designers. The benefits of such an exhibition in regards to cultural promotion are in awareness raising amongst the general Suva community rather than Rotumans alone.

The Rotuman Student Association of the University of the South Pacific (USP) has a valuable role to play in the protection and promotion of culture. In 2004 the Association was involved in a variety of activities designed to promote Rotuman culture, some of which were specifically focused on USP Rotuman students while some engaged a wider community. Their recent performance at the USP Open Day in September 2004 is a good example of an activity that serves to promote awareness about Rotuman culture. Howard and Rensel (2001) suggest that of all the activities fostered by migrant organizations, none is more important to formation of Rotuman cultural identity than dance. They acknowledge the importance as being three-fold: by enabling Rotumans to interact with each other'; by 'objectifying and idealizing Rotuma and its culture; and by broader public awareness of culture and cultural identity.

### Suva – Rotuma Initiatives

Promotion of Rotuman culture is not only being conducted for a Suva audience; apart from the maintenance of important cultural links for the Suva based community, there have been many initiatives that have established, or have the potential to establish, tangible links between the communities in Suva and Rotuma.

The *LäjeRotuma* Initiative is a key example. Established in Rotuma in 2002, *LäjeRotuma* was initially created as 'an environmental awareness and development program' (*LäjeRotuma* Initiative, 2004a) in response to the dramatic changes (physical and visual) in the Rotuman foreshore (Anderson, 2004). Since then the program has been evolving in shape and purpose. The project's Coordinator foresees the possibility that *LäjeRotuma* will assist in fortifying the links between the two communities (Rotumans in Rotuma and Rotumans in Suva), and acknowledges that the lessons learnt by the Suva based Rotumans involved in community outreach programmes on the island have included cultural aspects as well as a broadening of the understanding of the depth of 'local knowledge' that exists in Rotuma (Anderson, 2004). *LäjeRotuma* also has the potential for creating awareness about the island itself on a more broad based level as many of the board members and supporters of *LäjeRotuma* are not Rotuman. The Initiative has also conducted workshops with commu-

nities such as the Solomon Island students at USP, which helps not only with the exchange of environmental knowledge and capacity building but also with cross-cultural awareness raising.<sup>8</sup>

In May, celebrations were held at Churchward Chapel in Suva to commemorate the joining of the church to the Rotuma Methodist circuit; previously Churchward Chapel had been included in the Suva Methodist circuit. Reverend Langi recognised that the loss of language and identity (through migration from Rotuma) was the catalyst in the request of the Rotuma Methodist Church elders to bring Churchward Chapel Congregation to be part of the Rotuma Division (Langi, 2001). The celebrations included both Rotuma and Suva based Rotumans and performances of the *tautoga* and choirs from members of both communities. The importance of this is primarily for the Rotuman community as it helps to establish important links between the community in Rotuma and Suva, while also helping to reinforce language and culture.

The *Tefui Monthly*, a newspaper, was launched in March 2004. While not the first Rotuman language newspaper, the paper claimed to be the first bilingual English and Rotuman newspaper (*The Tefui Monthly*, 15 March, 2004: 1). The Editorial claimed that one of the main aims of the publication was to assist in 'preserving traditional practices and customs', and to create 'national awareness' of 'a people that still has its tradition and custom intact' (Editorial, 2004: 2). By producing a publication in both Rotuman and English languages, the publishers are able to target audiences in both the Rotuman and non-Rotuman communities. Most articles published in the newspaper pertain to Rotuma but the newspaper has a broader appeal because of the diversity in the content with articles focusing on government policy, land and culture.

### Suva Rotuman Community and the UNESCO Recommendations

All the activities and initiatives outlined in this paper are compatible with the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore. The Recommendation was adopted at the General Conference in Paris in November 1989. Containing seven sections, the section 'Identification of folkore' (Section B) has been identified as of relevance because of the community and individual responsibility that it promotes. Of the six recommendations contained within the UNESCO document, one is of particular relevance to this paper; this is on 'Dissemination of folkore' (Section E). This can be interpreted as the clause most relevant to the promotion of culture. Within this Section member

<sup>8</sup> For further information on the Workshop refer to *LäjeRotuma* (2004b)

states are reminded that the attention of people should be drawn to the importance of folklore as an ingredient of cultural identity. Furthermore, among a series of recommendations, Member States are advised to

- (a) encourage the organization of national, regional and international events such as fairs, festivals, films, exhibitions, seminars, symposia, workshops, training courses, congresses, etc., and support the dissemination and publication of their materials, papers and other results;
- (b) encourage a broader coverage of folklore material in national and regional press, publishing, television, radio and other media...;
- (f) facilitate meetings and exchanges between individuals, groups and institutions concerned with folklore, both nationally and internationally, taking into account bilateral cultural agreements.

These recommendations can also be of value at a community level, serving as guidelines for possible action to be taken. It is clear that the initiatives outlined in this paper meet the requirements stipulated in Section E. The activities undertaken and events planned have helped to publicise Rotuman language and culture within the community. Additionally, because of the way in which media has reported these events and activities, the Suva based initiatives of the promotion of Rotuman culture have had the benefit of awareness raising amongst the population of Fiji on both a city, and the national level, and have helped to fulfil Recommendation E part (b). In many ways this promotion or awareness raising has served as an education process by disseminating the story of Rotuma's history while also 'showcasing' many cultural artifacts and traditions.

The PICAF Exhibit and *The Tefui Monthly* clearly meet Recommendation E, part (a). The publicity surrounding the PICAF exhibition drew attention to the history and culture of the Rotuman people while also serving as a means of highlighting some key political issues, such as the current status of the community in Fiji. *The Tefui Monthly* published a diverse collection of articles that not only helped to educate readers on the history and traditions of Rotuma and Rotumans, but again drew attention to current issues of concern. Published in English and Rotuman the paper had the ability to attract a readership from the broader Fiji community.

The works of *LäjeRotuma* and the Rotuman Students Association have also met the objectives of this Recommendation. *LäjeRotuma* has conducted workshops with communities in Suva and Rotuma that have helped to disseminate information about the island, and its culture and

traditions. Reports of the work undertaken by the Initiative have been produced. Through their participation in events such as the USP Open Day, members of the Rotuman Students Association have been able to draw attention to aspects of culture and tradition of the island, thereby fulfilling Recommendation E part (f).

*LäjeRotuma* has served as a focal point for exchanges between various communities in Suva and Rotuma. Because the workshops and meetings have involved both Rotumans and non-Rotumans, *LäjeRotuma* has served as a body that facilitates the exchange of information about cultural practice and has helped to create a general awareness about cultural attributes. The Initiative has received support from individuals, groups and institutions including the World Wide Fund for Nature and USP.

The Rotuman Students Association and Churchward Chapel both act as meeting places for members of the Rotuman Community. The Students Association meets regularly and is able to facilitate interactions between Rotumans from Rotuma and those from elsewhere. This in itself is a cultural exchange. Furthermore, the affiliation of the Rotuman Students Association with the University of the South Pacific Students Association (USPSA) ensures that Rotuman students are involved with the wider university community. It can be argued that the USP population in general is aware of the existence of Rotuman culture and tradition, primarily as a result of the activities of the Rotuman Students Association. Seemingly fairly centrally located (i.e. one university campus in one city), it must be noted that USP serves a regional community, while the staff and students are drawn from the international community. Thus Rotuman culture, when exhibited at such a level, has the benefit of promoting the culture and creating awareness on a global scale.

Members of the university community are given the opportunity to gather together and participate in a range of cultural activities that enable Rotuman students to represent the community while simultaneously reinforcing their culture. Activities students can partake in include the learning of traditional chants, dances and ceremonies and the creation of traditional artifacts including dress items (Isimeli, 2004). Being a member of the Association gives young Rotumans the opportunity to meet with other Rotuman speakers and to raise matters of concern (on both a cultural and student level). The Rotuman Students Association also helps the community by establishing a veritable alumni of students – those who have graduated, are able to assist the Rotuman community in general and have helped to draw attention to their culture (Isimeli, 2004).

On a different level, the Churchward Chapel serves as an important base for the Rotuman community. At the time of the 1996 census, a ma-

majority of Rotumans were Methodists (Ratuva, 2002). The Chapel's regular services and meetings enable Suva Rotuman people to come together as a community. Services are conducted in the Rotuman language and there is an active Youth Group. In 2004 the Rotuman Youth Group of the church invited members of other communities, including Australians and Cook Islanders, to participate in a performance for the Church community. This encouraged an inter-cultural exchange through the learning of dances and general socialization.

Events such as the PICAF Exhibit also helped to bring people together from a variety of communities. The publicity the opening evening generated ensured that people in the wider Suva community were, at the very least, talking about the Exhibit and, accordingly, Rotuman culture.

Many of the activities outlined have been able to bring the people of the island-based and Suva-based Rotuman communities together, thus strengthening links between the two communities and helping to ensure that aspects of culture are preserved. Such exchanges can only help in ensuring that the linkages between the communities are maintained. In this regard it is interesting to note another provision of Section E: '...distortion during dissemination should be avoided so that the integrity of the traditions can be safeguarded' (UNESCO, 1989). By virtue of the activities and functions outlined having been initiated and conducted by members of the community, and because they have, in many instances, served to reinforce the links between the Rotuman community (island and city) the integrity of the traditions' have been assured and safeguarded (UNESCO, 1989).

### Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this paper has been to highlight the ways in which protection and promotion of a minority culture can be undertaken from a series of community initiatives rather than Government policy or mandate. The paper has also contextualised these moves within an international framework. This does not serve to imply that Government should not assist with the protection and promotion of minority culture, for, indeed, Government has an implied responsibility through its involvement with and membership of bodies like the United Nations and UNESCO, both of which have made declarations and recommendations on protection and promotion of minority culture and traditions.

By highlighting specific case studies, this paper demonstrates that it is possible for minority communities to embark upon such projects on their own. The article also shows the way in which the initiatives under-

taken are compatible with recommendations being made on the international level and can serve as examples to other communities. The paper also shows that where activities are primarily local initiatives, like the activities that are primarily Rotuman initiatives as highlighted in this paper, there emerges the added benefit of enabling the community to promote awareness of the cultures and traditions of the community, while avoiding any possible exploitation of it. For Rotumans, the activities, by forging links between the Rotuma Rotuman and Suva based Rotuman communities, combined with many overseas initiatives, show that the past fears of losing Rotuman culture and language may eventually subside.

### References

- 'Editorial.' *The Tefui Monthly*, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2004: 2
- Anderson, K. (2004) *Interview with LäjeRotuma Coordinator*, conducted by telephone, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2004, Suva (unpublished).
- Beddoes, M. (2004) *Government Policies towards Minorities in Fiji*, unpublished transcript of presentation made to University of the South Pacific Students, Suva, 27<sup>th</sup> April.
- Howard, A. (2001) 'Where Has Rotuman Culture Gone? And What is it Doing There?' in *Pacific Studies*, 24(1/2): 63-88. Paper downloaded on 18/3/02 from: <http://www.hawaii.edu/oceanic/rotuma/os/howsel/33where.html>
- Inia, E. K. (2001) *Kato'aga: Rotuman Ceremonies*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Irava, I. (1977) 'The Emigration of Rotumans to Fiji', in C. Plant (Ed.), *Rotuma: Split Island*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, pp.153-160
- Isimeli, F. (2004) 'The importance of participatory community action for the promotion of a cultural group: a case study of the University of the South Pacific Rotuman Students Association and the LäjeRotuma Initiative'. unpublished report, September.
- LäjeRotuma (2004a) *LäjeRotuma Initiative Planning Meeting Agenda and Planning Schedule*, (meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> August, WWF, Suva)
- LäjeRotuma (2004b) *Workshop Programme: LäjeRotuma- Solomon Island USP Students Training of Trainers in Community Resource Conservation Workshop*, (held 30<sup>th</sup> August-2<sup>nd</sup> September, Suva)
- LäjeRotuma (2004c) *DAP Progress Report (1)*, 25<sup>th</sup> February and .
- LäjeRotuma (2004d) *DAP Progress Report (2)*, 15<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> May
- Lal, V. (2000) 'The Rotumans of Fiji: A Mockery of Indigenous Rights', (as reproduced on *Pacific Islands Report* website, Pacific Islands Development Program, East-West Centre, University of Hawaii, (available online) <<http://166.122.164.43/archive/2000/December/12-29-02.html>>, downloaded 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2001)

- Langi, J. (2004) *Promotion and Protection of Rotuman Language and Culture*, unpublished written response to interview questions of K. Anderson and F. Isimeli with Reverend Dr. Jione Langi, General Secretary for the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, September.
- Ministry of Finance and National Planning (Fiji Government), (2002) *20-year Development Plan (2001-2020) for the enhancement of Participation of Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans in the Socio-economic Development of Fiji*, Parliament of Fiji, Parliamentary Paper No. 73 of 2002
- Minority Rights Group International, (no date) 'Who are Minorities?', as per MRG website, (available on line) <<http://www.minorityrights.org/>>, consulted July 2004.
- Parke, A. (2003) *Rotuma: Custom, Practice and Change: An Exploration of Customary authorities, the Kinship System, Customary Land Tenure and Other Rights*. Coombs Academic Publishing, Canberra: RSPAS, ANU.
- Ratuva, S. (2002a) *Participation For Peace: A study of Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Religious Perception in Fiji*. Suva, Fiji: Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA).
- Ratuva, S. (2002b) 'God's will in paradise: the politics of ethnicity and religion in Fiji'. *Development Bulletin*, No. 59, October: 21
- The Tefui Monthly*, 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2004
- UNESCO (1989) *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, adopted by General Conference, 25<sup>th</sup> session, Paris, 15 November.
- UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003) *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, submitted to the International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages, Paris, March.

**Kylie Anderson** is currently Lecturer in Department of History & Politics at the University of the South Pacific. She is the coordinator of the Politics courses 'Government & Public Policy in the South Pacific' and 'Advanced Pacific Politics'. One of her key research interests is the protection and promotion of minority culture and language as a human right. **Feskatoa Isimeli** was, at the time of the research leading to this paper, a student at the university and served as President of the Rotuma Students Association (USP) for two years (2003 & 2004); Isimeli is also active in the LājeRotuma Initiative. Both authors attended, participated in, and supported the activities outlined in this paper.