



O Arise!



★ Michael Dom

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**Poems on Papua New Guinea's
Politics & Society**

Michael Dom

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Reviews

It's very difficult for a writer or poet not to be political in a developing nation. In this they are following a long tradition. In more regressive regimes they are mercilessly suppressed. In PNG this is fortunately not the case. At its worst the government has only inadvertently hindered such discourse by failing to provide suitable avenues for its expression. The political class are doing themselves a disservice, not least because the writers and poets are finding their own platforms, most notably on social media. If the politicians prefer not to listen the ordinary people will. A poem is a powerful weapon, especially in the hands of a master like Michael Dom. One day the politicians will rue their deafness.

Phil Fitzpatrick – Author & publisher Pukupuk Publishing

Michael Dom has poetry all over him and is surely the most talented of Papua New Guinean poets. Though his array of poetry is diverse, his work on PNG politics is filled with the best piercing and most blistering political poetry ever. His poem can drive a plebeian to madness, a bureaucrat searching for civic virtue and a politician hanging his or her head in shame for self-serving. The artistically worded prose makes us stand in awe and admiration and is definitely a work of a gifted mind. I assure you that you will experience the anguish and mischief of PNG politics in your mind's eye and equally a hope for a brighter future in this work.

*Kelakapora Sil Bolkin – Author of *The Flight of the Galkope**

I have read most, if not all, these poems before and revisiting them again in print is to be reacquainted with old friends. Michael Dom is a world class poet and a world class poetic innovator. He writes - sometimes obliquely, sometimes directly - about politics, society, corruption, development and other crucial issues in the life of a nation, in reality it could be any nation, struggling to be fair to itself and its people; And often not struggling nearly hard enough because the end result of struggle may be a real threat to privilege and entitlement. Michael Dom uses poetry to reveal such truths without ever glossing over the difficulties of moving to a better state.

Keith Jackson AM – Adjunct Professor School of Journalism & Communications, The University of Queensland

To Maeve O' Collins

On behalf of The Dom Family

Thank you for teaching our father. Thank you for being our bubu. You helped to raise some proud Papua New Guineans.

I will always remember our family visits to the House of Parliament and the National Museum. No one else would have taken us there, but you did, and I am so glad that we went—cramped little red car and all.

I am sorry about the lintel and the carved posts which were destroyed, but there was very little anyone could do to stop it from happening. This book doesn't make up for them (nor, I think, does the other one). Nothing will. We've lost those artworks forever. They're not alive anymore, like when we saw them. Now they're just dead relics of a culture that people would sooner forget. Maybe we can learn better from what happened. I hope so.

I hope that the poetry in this book can help us.

M.T. Dom

Contents

Reviews.....	3
Yesterday we dreamed	8
Tribalism to Nationalism	9
Welcome to Bibliocracy	10
A message from the Estate of Icarus.....	12
Dear Honorable Sirs	13
Limerick for the clowns in parliament	15
Limerick on the Exim Bank loan	15
Verse on the lintel	16
O arise all ye	16
Olgeta kirap	16
Waiting for 2050.....	17
Sonnet 16: 1975 to 2015	18
The Aspiring Politician’s 36 Winning Ways for Making Monkeys	19
Three senryu for free education	21
Olsem wanem nau, Ongagno?	21
Oh my Penge	22
Sonet 6: Long tulait bai yumi kalapim dispela banis kalabus.....	24
It’s time to clean up the mess	25
Where are our leaders?	27
What do you promise to do?	29

Kap(r)isiousness continues.....	30
State of the Public Service.....	31
Sonet 10: ‘Lele ino mo laikim pinga blong mi	32
Sijo for the Flame of the Forest.....	33
Sijo for the Sepik	33
Sijo on mining.....	33
Sijo on the loss of culture.....	34
Sijo on a brother-leader	34
In light of such wisdom, I am found wanting	35
The Tao of Women.....	36
Who wrongs?	37
The Sum of Our Parts	38
One day, in this place, we will have good things	39
A candlelight market in Port Moresby	41
Mama senis o? Papa istap wankain yet.	42
Version City	44
Kainkain Siti	44
Haibun: ol maket mama	45
Sonnet 3: I met a pig farmer the other day	46
The political economy of a pig farmer’s life.....	47
Two reasons why we dig holes.....	48
We are not as poor as some people say	49
I am the red, red stain.....	50

They say primitive	51
Exiting a hotel in the Pacific	52
Fools & Gods	54
Sonnet 18: Shy smiles by the road – sweet misdirection	55
Ol tok bokis:.....	56
Mi na yu.....	59
The political economy of SP stubbies.....	63
We live, we sell, we buy, we cast, we pray	57
Preparing for Repentance Day – castrating the Melanesian Way	59
The days after Independence Day	60
ADDENDUM	64
What I can do for my country is keep the faith	65
On electing leaders: who wrongs first, the people or the State?.....	75
Acknowledgements.....	82

Yesterday we dreamed

It was not so long ago
Hardly more than a lifetime or so
When our nation was so young
And our history had just begun.

Then, they stood them all
Forefathers tall
And blessed us
With an anthem song.

We forward went, hither sent
Each tribe and clan,
In this proud Melanesian land,
Every son and daughter born;
United we did stand
With transient shackles shorn
As a new day did dawn.

Did then we dare to dream
And transcend as one?
Have our ancestors been told
How far we have come?
What do we tell of?
What praise, what glory,
That children will hear
As pleasant bedtime stories?

Our Guardians now indulge
In self-serving histrionics

While idle sons
And beleaguered daughters
Survive on informal economics.

Where now, the integrity of Chiefs?
That they may bless us truly
Where too, the vigor of youth?
That will ensure a victory.
How now our mothers and children
Bear the brunt of brutality
When we fail to act rightly?
What future lies in our hands?
Who will fulfill this people's destiny?

O arise all ye sons of this land
Let us sing of our joy to be free...
Only yesterday we dreamed
Let us sleep no more.

Tribalism to Nationalism

Until this day we are tribes;
 each one desiring nationhood,
Eyes closed to the past, blind to the present,
 yet we seek a future;
Was what we called our Melanesian Way
 a transient dream?

Welcome to Bibliocracy

A vibrant democracy
A rampant hypocrisy
This is the PNG way

Casual religious bigotry
Crippled informal economy
This is all we have today

Women die from pregnancy
Children learn delinquency
Men rape with impunity

Pursue polygamy and promiscuity
Fear to free homosexuality
Ignore the blatant inequality

Villagers live like their ancestors
Ministers live like rich investors
Working folk are forever debtors

High unemployment rate
No parliamentary debate
Leads the way to a failed state

Leaders ply disinformation
Speakers try misinformation
People get lost in confusion

Crimes our leaders perpetrate

Perpetuate societies hate
On PNG time, a savior will be late

Sacrifices must be made
Carvings that craftsmen had made
Were the first to go on our crusade

We brought home a Holy Book
And that same day sanity forsook
We placed it in the House of Crooks

We say we are Melanesian
More Christian than other Christians
Then crucify our own Constitution

Our newfangled philosophy
Is Melanesian Christianity
Welcome to Bibliocracy.

A message from the Estate of Icarus

When the Poet's voice is silenced
There is only an after echo of fading thought.
It is the snuffing of candlelight at the market table.

When the Poet's voice is silenced
Truth is raped at the Public Gathering Places
And Beauty is fed to bastardized Beasts.

When the Poet's voice is silenced
The Politicians will sing you sweet lullabies
As their Priests offer you the wine of forgetfulness;

When the Poet's voice is silenced
The Politicians scheme your Melanesian philosophies
And their Priests dictate your customary offerings.

Lo, when the Poets cower, in shadows, relegated;
Behold! There stand the Politicians, shining, elevated,
As the people swoon at the words of their Priests;

Our graveyards "are fine and fertile places"
Bestowed with all the knowledge and wisdom
Of Good Men & Women who pass Unborn,
When the Poet's voice is silenced.

Dear Honorable Sirs

We are your loyal supporters, remember us
Your fellow Papua New Guineans
The honored rabble that raised you up to lofty heights
We drink your poisoned brew
While we suffer your misspent fortunes
Watch our heritage squandered
And our independence scorned.

In our National Parliament
Where once walked wise men, proud and true
Where once were just laws, written and defended
Foolishness now rules that house
Where the Honorable vie for their own (rabble)
With their educated rhetoric, regurgitated oratory
Sanctimonious as wallowing sows and as smelly.

In our Nation's Capital
Beggars loiter while wealthy loaded landowners' loaf
Pickpockets, thieves and informal street sellers roam
As mountains crumble and trees topple
Littering our rivers and seas
Our ancestral lands and siblings are divided over riches
Money for dishonorable dignity in Port Moresby.

There Honorable Sirs you dwell
And celebrate our nation's prosperity
Which we apparently are yet to receive
There Honorable Sirs you play pernicious politics
You and your rabble, squabble, dribble, grapple

For position, power and prestige, PNG Big Man policies
Your slightest glance is our grace, Dear Honorable Sirs.

In our towns and villages
Far, far from freeways, Fairfax and Finance Ministry
We hear tales of civilization, rumors of development
Our aging fathers idly reminisce
While their beloved sons seek other forms of bliss
Mothers and matriarchs do what their daughters should do
Excuse what their children have done, and for you.

We are the commoners from those rural towns and villages
Those hamlets not seen on Falcons flight
Distant, and remote, you've forgotten our vote
Our sweat feeds this nation
Our blood/land bathes/fills your alters/coffers
Our tears are granted no remittance
Our fates are in your hands.

We are the unheard voices
Disenchanted, disowned and denied
How long lived is your deception
Schemes and dreams and fantasies
Where are the promised fruits?
Your majestic visions
Leave us in dearth and doom.

We are your people
We gave, glorified and groveled for you
Now disrespected, deceived and destitute
We are the infants you suckle on a flimsy future

The unborn cheated, betrayed and bartered
As your virulent greed robs our womb.
God save Papua New Guinea!

Limerick for the clowns in parliament

When I think of government as a circus
It makes sense why our leaders pervert us
Because at the end of the day
For being a clown to pay
Cavorting and contorting is their business.

Limerick on the Exim Bank loan

Penge, all hairy, lean muscled and mean
Was seduced by an Asian prom queen,
But when the bed was spread
And he went for the bread,
He found out that the queens' name was Dean

Obama to O'Namah

Papua New Guinea's answer to President Obama
Was the 2011 duo that we liked to call O'Namah
They gave us two GG's, PM's, CJ's and much drama
But come election time they split-up, what a bummer!

Verse on the lintel

Eclectic craftsmen carved one log by hand,
With dreams in their hearts unseen by others,
Before these halls where true leaders should stand:
A host of faces, a band of brothers.

It was a carving meant to instill awe.
Now it's lost to Papua New Guineans,
Those who will never stand before this door
And sense here their soul - Melanesian!

O arise all ye

Chainsaw-churchgoers
Razed 'Haus Tambaran's' lintel
"O arise all ye..."
Kumul's tattered cloth flutters
From a rust-eaten white pole

Olgeta kirap

Sen-saw-lotu-lain
Rausim bun blo 'Haus Tambaran'
Olgeta kirap
Kumul bagarap antap
Long pipia hap aien

Waiting for 2050

Say what you will
for faded glory
those tales have had their day

Pay homage as you wish
to colleagues and cronies
those mates have gone their way

Days past our dawning
history yet forming
put our eight point plan away

Swayed by the crooning
supporters are swooning
and development is further delayed

Does a child envision
from a mother's bosom
his own children's destiny today?

Yet a lifetime has been
and after all one has seen
isn't another two score too far away?

If we dream of a day
and we hope and we pray
will God grant what we want—less delay?

If we argue of meaning
without rhyme, within reason
the job of government is governing
not dreaming

Wide awake, with eyes open
and minds soberly focused
which is wanting
as we've found much too often

One can only hope
the next people we vote
make decisions deserving of note

While most struggle to survive
waiting for 2050 to arrive
we must try to keep that hope alive.

Sonnet 16: 1975 to 2015

September 16, Independence Day
And forty years it has been in between
Far down this road, how much closer today,
Are we to that Melanesian dream?
What may we toast this Independence Day?
Which-where have we been, what-when have we seen?
Why may we boast of 'much better' today?
How much bolder and brighter do children dream?
Have we won the war, so that they may play
Safe from those whose hearts and minds are obscene?
Then maybe one day our children will say
What wonderful people we must have been?
God save us all this Independence Day,
Keep us just as or better than the Queen.

The Aspiring Politician's 36 Winning Ways for Making Monkeys

We are in the business of making monkeys
We breed them and feed them
We baptize them in our creed
We bestow them with our greed

We are in the business of making monkeys
We wean them and preen them
We crown them at our will
We disown them at a whim

We are in the business of making monkeys
We inveigle them and ignite them
We inspire them with our dreams
We ingrain them in our schemes

We are in the business of making monkeys
We belie them and belittle them
We baffle them with ease
We bamboozle them as we please

We are in the business of making monkeys
We deride them and deprive them
We deny them satisfaction
We defeat them with our system

We are in the business of making monkeys
We cajole them and enroll them

We payroll them with our profits
We pacify them with our promises

We are in the business of making monkeys
We defile them and revile them
We educate them in depravity
We domesticate them in poverty

We are in the business of making monkeys
We mislead them and maroon them
We amputate them from reason
We direct them to self-destruction

We are in the business of making monkeys
We whore them and devour them
We defy them with our hypocrisy
We deny them true democracy

Three senryu for free education

a right provided
like a prized jewel
free education

a few boxes ticked
to keep the voters happy
free education

a bone tossed to
hungry dogs to fight over
free education

Olsem wanem nau, Ongagno?

Ohh, brata blong mi Ongagno
Blong wanem yu toromoi kumul bilas bilong yu?

Na traipela tit blong pik ya,
Yu lusim igo bek long bus o?
Em ino moa pas long bros bilong yu.

Na we stap gris pik bilong kaikai
Na putim long sikin?
Ating singing bilong yu nau em ino inap swit tumas?

Ohh, brata blong mi Ongagno
Olsem wanem nau, Ongagno?

Oh my Penge

Oh my Penge!
What a precious fool you are
To sell yourself so cheaply
Where is your forefather's legacy?

Your gardens, long unattended
Are barren and overgrown in weeds
Our land that sustained
A hundred generations
Lies pilfered, plundered and polluted
Grieve now for what you have done
More so what you have not
Give back to your children
What your fathers gave to theirs.

Once upon a time
From a revered hilltop green
You're beloved Kumul
Was raised so proudly
Proclaiming identity and liberty
But you have swapped
Your people's philosophy
For wealth and prosperity
A bloated ego and procured status
Adorned with bright trinkets
As your shining vanity
Yet stumbling like a fool
Caring not for caution
For you have chosen a starless path.

Oh my Penge!
What a precious fool you are
To sell yourself so cheaply
How many good men will die for you?
And how many proud women
Will cradle your babies?

When your sons no longer bring you
Your carved walking stick
You will lie in the ruins of your hausman
In cold grey ashes and sackcloth
Lamenting your misery and loss.

When your daughters have all fled
To foreign tribes, as unpaid brides
Or refugees of your savagery
None will return to bake kaukau
At your hearth, nor water
To quench your thirst
Thus you will choke
On stale memories of wasted years.

At your last and final repose
With no women to wail, nor kin to console
Nor chiefs to slay pigs in your honor
Your garden lands will be denuded
Divided among your rivals
While your untutored children
Will enter into bondage
To ignobility and shame.
Oh my Penge!

What a precious fool you are
To sell yourself so cheaply
How many good people
Must weep for you?

Sonet 6: Long tulait bai yumi kalapim dispela banis kalabus

Kumul; yu tingim tu taim tulait i buruk?
Antap long Waigani maunten, kapsait olsem ret na gol
Ikam long bilak na bilak skai – stalait i pundaun –

Yu tingim tu ol driman stori mipela ibin toktok?
Taim mipela stap wantaim long bik moning – kol –
Mipela poroman strong tru taim tutak i holim graun;

Dispela taim mipela raunraun nating long laik
Nogat promis, tasol mipela bilip strong tru
Stil paia i stap long pasin; yumi tok aut na tok stret.

Na taim Sana i kirapim dispela paia – traipela lait –
Dispela paia i kamap strong insait long bel trutru
Na mipela save olsem i gat longpela rot i stap yet;

Bai yumi abrusim mak bilong dispela haus kalabus
Taim bel na tingting bilong yumi i kalapim banis.

It's time to clean up the mess

When we were still floating, “In the currents / That swept this land”¹, things were a lot messier than they are now. But, there were less of us to see that. *In fact, we didn't know it was messy.*

Much later it was different “For white man, he came / And our place changed forever”.² Well, mostly. Maybe we gave in too easily and didn't learn how to clean up our own mess, or to not make one at all.

The question is “What happened back then!”³ (?) Everything got white-washed in our pre-Falcongate days. We hid the scandal of ourselves and now for the life of us (or our kids) we can't figure it out!

So every five years we choose who is to be in charge of ‘cleaning up the mess’⁴ left by those others before them. Funny that, because there are familiar faces in this crowd from the last clean-up crew.

And it's always one mess or another. But one learned friend says that that is what we should expect from a vibrant democracy: Individualism vs. Pluralism⁵. *Now we live in a mess created by that schism.*

Do you get that sneaking doubt that somehow you're partly responsible for the disorder too? I do. Maybe it's just me and I should check in at Laloki⁶. I know for sure I didn't check that box!

It's spring-cleaning season again PNG, so if we all get together we can clear out The Mob⁷ we put in charge. That may be a faint hope but it's only as weak as our smallest finger that gets stained with the ink of our guilt.

We've been here on this Treasure Island⁸ for a long while. Not discounting the chaos it's time we made more than a scratch on the pages of history. Time is ticking on, so today, let's make a mark not a mess.

References:

¹ Lines from *A Rower's Song* a poem by Steven Edmund Winduo, from his book *A Rower's Song*, Manui Publishers 2009, Port Moresby PNG.

² Lines from *White man's war* a poem by P. Naringi, published in The National Newspaper Writer's forum on 23 September 2011.

³ *What happened back then* is a poem by Lapieh Landu, published in The Crocodile Prize Literature 12 January 2012 on the website Keith Jackson & Co: PNG Attitude.

⁴ The most recently recycled political rhetoric regurgitated for public consumption.

⁵ See the essay *Theoretical Underpinnings of Development in PNG* by Samil Yapi Yanam, published in The Crocodile Prize Literature 12 January 2012 on the website Keith Jackson & Co: PNG Attitude.

⁶ Laloki is a popular destination for idealists and others who might hear voices inside their heads (Is that my rebellious conscience I hear?).

⁷ Also known as Parliament.

⁸ *Treasure Island* is a novel by Robert Louis Stevenson. Some wise guy said that PNG was "an island of gold floating on a sea of oil".

Where are our leaders?

Where are the Members?

They hide in their chambers.

Where are the morals?

They made Parliament a brothel.

Where are the ethics?

They play Peter's petty politics.

Where are the leaders?

They fake their laurels.

Where are the chiefs?

They cause us grief.

Where are the heroes?

They give us sorrows.

Where is swift justice?

They fired the police.

Where is the court?

They hired lawyers to rot.

Where is the law?

They changed it before.

Who made them the Members?

It was us, you must remember.

Who buried the morals?

It was us gave them the shovel.

Who marred the ethics?

It was us ignored the critics.

Who made them the leaders?

It was us let go the tethers.

Who made them chiefs?

It was us who faked beliefs.

Who made them heroes?
It was us hid the horrors.
Who stalled swift justice?
It was us for political peace.
Who challenged the courts?
It was us took it as sports.
Who changed the law?
It was us gave them the floor.

What do we do for Members?
Our rights must not be surrendered.
What do we do for morals?
Our words and deeds are for all.
What do we do with ethics?
Our Haus is built with its bricks.
What do we do for leaders?
Our brightest and best believers.
What do we do for chiefs?
Our customs are our relief.
What do we do for heroes?
Our democracy is in its death throes.
What do we do for swift justice?
Our aim must be accurate and precise.
What must we do for the courts?
Our laws we must not abort.
What do we do for the law?
Our leaders must arise and be more.

What do you promise to do?

If we give our votes to you
And you form our government
What do you promise to do?

Pledge to us you will be true
And work for our betterment
If we give our votes to you

After all that we've been thru
Our doom seems imminent
What do you promise to do?

To raise us up, to renew
Our ailing parliament
If we give our votes to you

Or will you throw us askew
As others did with a bent
What do you promise to do?

Good leaders are far too few
Our democracy laments
If we give our votes to you
What do you promise to do?

Kap(r)isiousness continues

Alas! The sentence was decreed
To our dirty dozen accused
Who dared to do the dastardly deed
A criminal mind had brewed
Victims now of their capricious creed

Justice has been done
And unstintingly so
We foot the bill and who has won
Penge, what have you to show
The robbery—done, the money—gone

For our new-age Barabbas
An incarcerated Master Thief
Paying a lifetime behind bars
His confessions met with disbelief
One more case-file for barristers

His infamous interview was YouTube fare
Though Kap(r)is was a celebrity for a time
His accusations were deemed unfair
And his star had lost its shine
Of the truth we remain unaware

A convenient scapegoat that wolf became
For justice demands its sacrificial lamb
And punishment for ill-gotten gain
But the taste of that vengeance was bland
The scales we use are not the same

One may still wonder at those names
And consider at the next ballot box
If the character in the poster frame
Represents a true leader or a fox
Make your stand or share the blame.

State of the Public Service

The public service we do - is not known.
The public we do service, - once a month.
The service we do public, - for the boss.
We do the public service. - They pay us.
We service. The public do. - No one cares.
We, the public, do service. - It's all good.
We service. Do the public? - Does anyone?
Do we service the public? - Yes we do!
Do we, the public, service? - Yes, sometimes.
Service the public, do we? - Not today.
Service we do the public - is secret.
Welcome to bureaucracy. - Out for lunch, (back at four).
If you have good ideas, - like I did, (long ago),
When you enter, please leave them - at the door.

Sonet 10: ‘Lele ino mo laikim pinga blong mi

Long taim mi paitim ‘lele bilong mi
Fopla string stap long pinga bilong mi
Mekim swit mo yet singsing bilong mi.

Bihain mi raun long paitim trabel man
Long narapela hap, Buka ailan.
Mi stap, long oda bilong ol kaptan,
Pinga bilong mi pulim masin gun.
Mi kamap olsem wanpela ‘lele string,
Open faia long oda blong gavman.

Mi no save long– ol–no save long mi.
I tru mipela wanpela kantri?
Ol tu paitim ‘lele olsem blong mi...

Bihain mi kam bek long ples bilong mi
‘Lele ino mo laikim pinga blong mi.

Sijo for the Flame of the Forest

A red Flame / hangs from the heights /
 in your proud green / forest home.
Pride you don't feel / nor care to know, /
 you love the glow / of city lights;
Fell your trees / and kill the Flame, /
 sell your green pride / and buy shame.

Sijo for the Sepik

Your forests will be felled, your bush burned
 and your swampland drained out,
To plant palm oil by the hectare,
 to get your share of foreign wealth.
Foreigners will make films,
 to show your grand-kids what you sold off.

Sijo on mining

We have moved mountains
 and dug deep into this earth to find gold
To exchange for paper notes,
 while burying our brothers in filth.
We call development
 the trenches dug between us for wealth.

Sijo on the loss of culture

Strangers teach you to sing songs
and march to a drum that they own;
To reject your garamut, your kundu
and the stilled speech of wood;
Their soporific chorus dulls your mind
and cheats your Black soul.

Sijo on a brother-leader

In those war games we played brother,
I was always first your friend.
When we stormed Fort Banner, smote our foes,
and when we leaped from its walls;
It was not so much my leading,
as you being one step behind.

In light of such wisdom, I am found wanting

There was a battered old kerosene lamp
of which my bubu had inordinate pride
He kept it lit at his bedside mat
besides the firelight at night
I'd always wondered why he'd bothered
to keep that relic of times long past
He'd always wondered why I'd ask
for his purpose seemed sure enough
And although my MagLite made him gasp
he said, "Such things will come to pass".

Awash in fire and lamplight both
we'd sit together of a night
ruminating each on the other's plight
Mine modern –carefree, careless curiosities
His ancient –careworn, careful custodianship.

On those brightly lit city streets
of which I had inordinate pride
Electric bulbs burn overhead
besides the television light at night
Too tired to ponder, why even bother
to regard such technological badges
Those wondrous gizmo's and cool gadgets
for my purpose seemed sure enough
And although my modernity makes me laugh
he said, "Such things will come to pass".

Awash in streetlamps and headlight beams both
there are no quiet sitting places
Every rambling soul has a lonely plight
In a brightly lit city with its haunted inhabitants
or a village hut darkened by my bubu's ghost.

The Tao of Women

In our war of opposite sexes
Consider, arrogant fools, The Tao
Humility gives them their power
There is a time for their submission
They know this, while we look for visions
And praise our own strengths and aggression
Their submission becomes a virtue
Neither as weakness nor as penance
Rather abiding their time; patience.

Their ying to our yang, too oft denied
Their brave hearts hid, suffer our service
Their wise heads bowed to please our power
Their bright eyes dimmed to ease our egos
Yet in their immortal souls –a fire!
And their bodies too, burn with desire
There, in the warm cradle of their womb
And in their arms, our children are borne
A victory over them spells doom.

Who wrongs?

Who's wrong, who's right, who cares?
Problems are a function of existence
We are factorial treatments in an experiment
Where our algebraic values are not given
Therefore, we proportion the vectors
This is how we might rationalize
She left: he right = the ratio of us
And the balance is one.
But we choose abstractions of us
By treating others as a fraction of ourselves,
You left/me right = the quotient of we
Then differentiate to infinity.
If there is no difference or no addition
What is our final summation?
Which algorithm encompasses?
Why apply this mensuration?
Where is the calculus to compute?
The multiplicity of humanity;
The matrices of civilization;
The simultaneous equations of unity;
The absolute value of integration?
But, they \neq us = we, who are one subset.
If this is our non-equation equation for life
Then in all probability our problems may be insoluble.
Who wrongs, who rights, whose care?

The Sum of Our Parts

The Sum of Our Parts

You can be the link that makes us all much stronger than

Single	Couple
Alone	Paired
Each	Both
Unit	Dual
One	Two
Me	We

I Me One Unit Each You Both Dual Two We Us

Me	We
One	Two
Unit	Dual
Each	Both
Alone	Paired
Single	Couple

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Single	Couple

One day, in this place, we will have good things

One day, in this place, we will have good things.
Good things will be here and there in this place
Because we now live in a Modern Age.
Our dead ancestors lived in a Stone Age.
And they did not know what we know today.
We can go, do and be where they could not.
We know that there are so many good things.
There are things that we need, others we want.
Here we will all work for them together.
And we will be proud to have built our dreams.
Here there will be a road, and there a bridge,
Because these are good to make folks wealthy.
Here there will be a clinic and a school.
And there will be a manned police station,
Because these are good to keep folks healthy.
The clinic will have clean, well equipped wards
Where a good doctor treats folks, kids and crooks,
Because even culprits get sick sometimes.
The school will have good books and computers,
Because our kids must know much more than us
So that they can fly airplanes from the port
While pastors watch in envy from church doors.
We'll still observe Sabbath, as some folk do,
And we'll work hard at whatever we do.
Here there will be a fresh produce depo,
Because the fresh produce has to be bulked.
Our farms, far better than our ancestors',

Will feed everyone here and elsewhere too.
There will be trade-stores and hardware outlets,
Because goods and stuff need to be traded.
Hard working folk will get paid for their time.
Businessmen, bankers, police and teachers too.
Plumbers, carpenters, mechanics for cars,
Because the roads will need cars and trucks too.
We will have a few poets to mend shoes.
Politicians here will boast of this place,
Because our politicians will work too.
When our friends or tourists come to visit
They will stay at guesthouses or hotels
And their kids will play in the park with ours.
Yes, bring kids too, because playgrounds need kids.
We'll be happy, healthy, wealthy and wise,
Smartly going about our Modern Age lives.
And when we dream at night, our ancestors,
In Stone Age Hausman or Haus Tambaran,
Will watch and listen in on our dream-talk
And they will ooh and aah and say to us
What proud parents we have made them all.
How they knew all along that we could do it.
And they will boast amongst themselves of us.
How they taught us all the good things we know
And how we are as smart as they once were,
Because dead ancestors need to feel pride too,
Now that these dreams belong to our children.
One day, in this place, we will have good things.
Yes, many good things will be here and there,
Because this place is home to good folk too.

A candlelight market in Port Moresby

A distant glimmer welcomes neighboring denizens
To a casual communion among masticating friends
As moths purge themselves upon your candle-flames
Bonfires of electricity blaze over parched n' blackened hills
And the threat of morning is carried by a west-wind chill
Yet nowhere else would we find such cordial respite
From domestic ennui at these hours south of midnight

Your softly flickering tabletops set in neat divisions
Are spread galore for creditors, with familiar provisions
And we are wont to stray on our nightly excursions
To your promise of camaraderie in lite-conversations
When we idly meander from our suburban asylums
Bathe us once again in your charmed candlelit glory
Be our one vestige of hope in this city of opportunity

And what tales do we have of each other to enlighten
Of politics and science, of economics and religion
The mundane amusements of plebeianism
How Nukie-boy betrayed his culpable wife
How she chased him waving her Tramontina-knife
And how the whole community followed after
To the station, to the courthouse and the market thereafter

Mama senis o? Papa istap wankain yet.

Mama wok long gaten – na papa igat pik
Mama wok long gaten – na papa igat bik-nem

Mama wok long gaten – na haus igat kaikai
Mama wok long gaten – na pikini karai long susu

Mama givim susu long bebi – na pikini kamap strong
Mama givim susu long bebi – inap emi wokabout na skul

Mama kukim kaikai – na ol famili kaikai na pulap
Mama kukim kaikai – na ol lain wantok singsing na lap

Mama klinim haus – na ol man i sindaun gut
Mama klinim haus – na olgeta samting istap gut tru

Papa givim bel – na mama wanpis kamap long hausik
Papa givim bel – sotim susu, na kamapim sik

Papa paitim mama – na emi ting olsem em man tru
Papa paitim mama – na pikinini karai long mama tu

Papa mekim long laik – na raun igo inap tulait
Papa mekim long laik – na stailim raun long dei na nait

Mama wok long opis – na papa igat kar
Mama wok long opis – na papa igat bia

Mama wok long opis – na haus igat kaikai
Mama wok long opis – na pikini karai long susu

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Papa paitim mama – na pikinini karai long mama tu

Papa mekim long laik – na raun igo inap tulait
Papa mekim long laik – na stailim raun long dei na nait

Mama senis o? – Papa istap wankain yet.
Mama senis o? – Papa, senisim tingting long het!

Version City

one kina peanuts
betel nut spewed on dog turds
fat blue flies swarm
beside spilled garbage piles
on a dusty curb in town

ten kina tinned nuts
clean, air-conned glass and tiled floors
bastard urchins rove
guarding remote-locked cars
parked outside a super-mart

Kainkain Siti

wan kina pinat
spet buai long dok pekpek
blu flies i raunim
ples we pipia kapsait
long dust kona blo taun

ten kina tin pinat
klin, air-con glass na tile floor
lus mangi i was
long kar igat masin-ki
sindaun long supamaket

Haibun: ol maket mama

Traipla moning iet na ol mama stap pinis long maket.
Redim kaikai blong salim, makim ples blong ol long
sindaun, na baim kainkain maket fi blong holim pasim spes
blong ol long abinun maket.

Ating liklik wokabout blong mi ino hevi tumas? Mi save
traim skelim wanem kain rot ol bihainim long kisim kaikai
kam, na ol isave silip olsem wanem long long nait?

Ating ol pikini blong ol i save tingim ol tu o? Mi noken
save. Mi ting olsem em i sore samting, tasol ol ino laikim
sore blong mi. Ating moa beta mi baim sampla potato na
kumu long abinun.

san pundaun strong tru,
mas salim potato nau –
free edukesen?

Sonnet 3: I met a pig farmer the other day

At the foot of Mount Giluwe we met
A place where they say ice falls from the sky
We spoke of pork and the lack of good vets
As we toil'd in his village piggery
Each planning how his stock would reach market
Did we both share a wish that pigs could fly?

Agriculture is our backbone we say
(Rhetorical ruse on farmers always)
Yet in our grand plans for development
We have forgotten what that really meant
From the highlands to the coastal islands
The struggle to feed ourselves never ends

If you met those who's unheard voices cry
You too would join me in questioning, why?

The political economy of a pig farmer's life

Until you have seen your hands blistering
Until you have felt sweat break like fever
Before another new gardens planting

Until you have cleaned the piss and manure
Cut, carried and replaced sodden bedding
Until you have closed the sow with the boar

Until then you only have an inkling
Of what a pig farmer does every day
For the fat pig meat that you are eating

You will never know what it means to say
To us, "agriculture is our back bone"
Until you know the sweat and costs we pay

For a simple meal, in our simple home
Sweet potatoes baked around the fire place
Cups of tea with sugar, lucky for some

And every day we hear about your race
To bring development to your people
But we know that your heart has no more space

If you will not share the gris pik with all
One day your house built from our bones will fall.

Two reasons why we dig holes

Burying dead bodies usually takes place
In fancy holes dug on some land space.

Most people dig those holes somewhere nice
But sometimes they don't have a choice.

Some people burn dead bodies to ashes
And this really saves on available land spaces.

Sometimes dead bodies are buried at sea
And slowly sink into muck for eternity.

Other fancy holes are dug large enough,
For the removal of some valuable stuff.

Sometimes these holes are dug somewhere nice
And most times people don't have a choice.

When all the valuable stuff's gone offshore
The hole is back-filled and land space restored.

Today we can dig holes in the seafloor
Right through the eternal muck and more.

Holes should be dug to bury the dead
And to remove valuable stuff instead.

We are not as poor as some people say

Our land is our source of food and our home
We work on our land almost every day
Selling coffee beans is our main income

In remote lands, where tourists find welcome
An old aid post is sixty miles away
Our land is our source of food and our home

Since there are no roads to town from our home
We carry coffee bags most of the way
Selling coffee beans is our main income

We don't just wait for services to come
While struggling to survive another day
Our land is our source of food and our home

Enjoy some coffee when your tour is done
That cup or two of brew gives our days pay
Selling coffee beans is our main income

We own our land and work it, unlike some
We are not as poor as some people say
Our land is our source of food and our home
Selling coffee beans is our main income.

I am the red, red stain

I am the betel nut,
The daga stick
And the lime pot:
I am the red, red stain.

I am the filthy eyesore,
The stained teeth
And the health hazard:
I am the mouth cancer.

I am the free gift,
The girls are garlanded with
And dance to greet:
I am the crowd pleaser.

I am the icebreaker,
The nut of kastom
And first act of the kibung:
I am the nut of peace.

And, I am the nut of conflict,
The urban curse
And the rural blessing:
I am the lifestyle choice.

I am the betel nut,
The daga stick
And the lime pot:
I am the red, red stain.

They say primitive

They think shareholdings
We think sharing.
They speak of levels
We speak of links.

They know salaries
We know subsistence.
They dream of riches
We dream of richness.

They say primitive
We say fundamental.
They see a time
We see a place.

They want tomorrow
We want today.
Their life is complexity
Our life is simplicity.

They need all conveniences
We need few essentials.
They will take everything
We will have nothing.

Exiting a hotel in the Pacific

My home is not your tourist attraction,
No supermarket for colourful trinkets and toys.
Our bows and arrows still kill game and foes, on untamed
reservations where we rule.
We planted yar trees for millennia before your cowboy
carbon trading.

My home is not your adulterous playground,
No sweetshop/sweatshop for pedophilic migrants or
philanthropic vagrants.
Our living cultures are to be observed with reverence for
the savage dignity of our ancients.
We will not bow to foreign gods no matter what your
enticements.

My home is not your smorgasbord menu,
No delicatessen for your conspicuous consumption.
Our rural livelihoods have kept us fed despite your urban
avarice.
We are utterly biodegradable, while even your manure lasts
for eons.

My home is not for your upper-crust business class citizens,
No blithe, blind, blunt, neo-barbarian brute should sun bake
on our beaches or bathe in our mountain spas.
Our natural habitats are not a hospital for the sick and
handicapped refugees of modernity.
We never put a 99 year lease on the air we breathe.

My home is not for your capitalist considerations,
No value added, duty free, WTO compatible tax holiday
trade agreement for my homelands.
Our lives belong to the land, unlike your vain, Viagra, vice
versa value system.
We gave generational blood, sweat and tears to our land for
which cash is no recompense.

My home is not your hotel in the Pacific.

There, sails my peace: There, soars my soul
There, sings my blood: There, stirs my bones:
There, sweets my dreams: There, sleeps my love
There, stands my home.

Fools & Gods

“A
King
May move
A man”
But
Only fools and gods
Could accept the odds
Doubt
That the future to be written
Is in the hands now writing
This
For tomorrows children will erase our inking
With the legitimacy of their own thinking
Seek
Where we are blind
They will soon find
Out
That the dreams we now offer
Do not satisfy their coffer
More
That is left here for their undoing,
Or less
That is written than what’s left unsaid.

Sonnet 18: Shy smiles by the road – sweet misdirection

I saw her that morning, across the road,
Watched her supple form, her feet firm in grace
I witnessed sweet beauty smashed like a toad!
Smacked that booty into death's cold embrace

Some Member made this road – re-election –
We kids played there, till hair and breasts begun...
Shy smiles by the road – sweet misdirection –
Now blood stained glass glitters in the mad sun.

I watched in horror the cruel crowds surround,
Felt their shock, pain and tears – grief turned to rage!
For her fate was sealed when none were around
And her tale is not on today's front page.

No one heard the resign of her mother
“At least my girl is free of her father”.

Ol tok bokis:

wanpela welpik
silip long sia king stap
pekpek i pulap
na sting insait long haus kuk
kainkain bagarapment

taim ol sanguma
sindaun insait long hausman
na dua i pas
olgeta gaden kaikai
baimbai tanim pipia

lukim lapun man
sindaun karai long gaden
husait i salim
ol yangpela man igo
painim kina long nambis?

harim masin
pairap long ples kanaka
diwai i pundaun
pikinini, yu stap we?
haus blong kumul bagarap

We live, we sell, we buy, we cast, we pray

We live in a land of milk and honey
Islands of gold floating on seas of oil
We trade this all for beer and money
When it's gone we return to routine toil

We sell the earth beneath our feet while our children play
Because the pastor says that God will bless us some day.

Some people have jobs or sometimes do work
They pay tax to the government coffer
Some people do farming, others just jerk
Off until they get a better offer

We buy the lies that Members flog while our children play
Because the pastor says that God will bless us some day.

Some live in grass huts far from POM city
Some live in tin huts close to POM city
No tap water or electricity
Less school, poor health and death by pregnancy

We cast our votes for higher bids while our children play
Because the pastor says that God will bless us some day.

People go to church to get salvation
They praise and pray their way into heaven
Pollies join them just before election

And harvest all the fruits from this haven

We pray to God for them to win while our children play
Because the pastor says that God will bless us some day.

Preparing for Repentance Day – castrating the Melanesian Way

Let's prepare ourselves for Repentance Day
Womenfolk are raped, menfolk are tight lipped
Let's castrate the Melanesian Way!

If we are mature let the law hold sway
Neither Bibles nor idols should be ripped
Let's prepare ourselves for Repentance Day

Shine a light on those crimes we hide away
If we can't get our men to keep it zipped
Let's castrate the Melanesian Way!

Our country is raped in much the same way
Members and Ministers need to be clipped
Help them to prepare for Repentance Day

If we want peace and justice to hold sway
We need to restore the good laws that slipped
Let's castrate the Melanesian Way

Forgive and forget on Repentance Day?
Live with regret till the country is flipped!
Let's prepare ourselves for Repentance Day
Let's castrate the Melanesian Way!

The days after Independence Day

Arise! Sons and daughters of this land
Let us sing of our joy to be free
It was only yesterday we dreamed

Now is the time that we make a stand
To govern ourselves responsibly
Arise! Sons and daughters of this land

The nation's future is in our hands
We must restore our democracy
Do today what yesterday we dreamed

Why suffer with leaders who have failed?
Let's resurrect our economy
Rise sons, rise daughters, rise hand in hand

How come we are forced from our own land?
Have we lost our sense of dignity?
With one voice let us shout our demand
(Let us raise our voices and proclaim)

Give tomorrows children what we dreamed
Awake! Sons and daughters of this land
Papua New Guinea – we are free
Forty years to grow, get up now, stand!

Mi na yu

Mi songan na yu sipsip
Mi sanap na yu sindaun
Mi toktok na yu mauspas
Mi grisim na yu tanim
Mi giaman na yu daunim
Mi karai na yu wara nating

Mi kisim na yu givim
Mi laikim na yu salim
Mi kaikai na yu hangre
Mi pulap na yu painim
Mi paulim na yu pilim
Mi dinau na yu bekim

Mi kamap na yu pundaun
Mi igo pas na yu igo lus
Mi saveman na yu kanaka
Mi bikman na yu pipiaman
Mi stap long kot na yu kam sapot
Mi stap antap na yu sutim graun

Mi raunraun na yu longlong
Mi ronim kar na yu brukim bus
Mi stap long opis na yu stap long bus
Mi slip long hotel na yu slip long rot
Mi kam long balus na yu ken lukim
Mi stap long Mosbi na yu stap long Moro

Mi igat kago na yu laikim kago

Mi dring kola na yu dring kol wara
Mi baim bia na yu spak tulait
Mi laikim meri na yu kisim kam
Mi holim moni na yu pasim han
Mi mekim save na yu stap nating

Mi nogat wari na yu bel hevi
Mi nogat sori na yu pilim pen
Mi nogat hevi na yu silip wari
Mi save long yu na yu save long mi
Mi no tingim yu na yu lusim tingting
Mi fit man tru na yu ia ino wanpela man tu!

The political economy of SP stubbies

If you give them a loose bottle
They will say to you 'my brada'!
If you give them a 6 pack
They will say to you 'ahh, kaksy'!
If you give them a 12 pack
They will say to you 'boi-man'!
If you give them a 24 box
They will say to you 'yu dadi-boss'!
If you give them more after
They will say to you 'yu memba'!

If they say to you 'my brada'
They want some beer money
If they say to you 'ahh kaksy'
They want you to support their beer scheme
If they say to you 'boi man'
They want you to lead the beer drinking team
If they say to you 'yu dadi-boss'
They want you to arrange for more beer
If they say to you 'yu memba'
They want you to secure their future beer.

ADDENDUM

What I can do for my country is keep the faith

“Faith is the only known antidote for failure”

– Napoleon Hill, Think and Grow Rich

I have been struggling with the thought that the upcoming national elections in 2017 may decide the future success or failure of our country.

But I don't entirely hold to this 'now or never' notion. Good people, with a will, must and do endure – one way or another.

Recently there have been many writers/commentators on PNG Attitude and elsewhere who have sounded a 'call to arms' for us to do something about the national elections next year. Others have called for change in the current political system.

While I agree with Martyn Namorong that one election cannot undo the troubles of the last 40 years I also think that we need to find amongst ourselves the leaders who are willing to step into the political arena to get something started. Some of those leaders are already at work and we should support them through the electoral process.

At this time it behooves us all to think more about what we want to do for PNG and what is in our power to do right now.

My fellow writer has expressed his thoughts on having a “can do” attitude, positive thinking and community based movements for change. I agree with much of his thinking and with the bottom-up approach of people in communities

taking responsibility for their own wellbeing. That is self-empowerment, and is in fact what a good government should enable its people to do.

Eventually however community movements need to coalesce into bigger arenas to become nationally defined movements for change. This is how political parties have their basis for representation.

In essence I don't believe it is a matter of us wresting power away from the 'predatory elite' and dethroning political czars through the electoral box or by otherwise igniting some revolutionary conflagration on a national scale. That kind of effort is not now within our powers and the latter may not necessarily achieve its desired objective.

On the contrary, I believe it is a matter of rekindling a spark in the grassroots people to use the power that is already in their hands. Reinvesting in individuals and in groups, in communities and in well organised (civil) societies, and finally on the national scene by arriving at a consensus for securing political representation.

Consensus is after all in the Melanesian Way.

Castigation of the 'predatory elite' and expulsion of political czars may be achieved with several million candlelight market power rather than a burnin n' a lootin.

I believe this socio-political movement may take time to build up momentum but can become an inevitable avalanche of change in PNG's democracy.

It is essential for any sort of movement that aims to create and foster change that its leadership keeps faith with its followers.

Therefore, while I understand Martyn's dismissal of the national elections and of our current democracy as a viable form of government, I steadfastly believe in democratic principles and in democratic elections.

Firstly, it seems counter intuitive to me to trash the very system that allows us to talk about trashing it without first having in mind a better system and the means with which to achieve it.

We should fervently defend the right to say what's wrong with what we are doing when we are doing it. True democracy allows this.

More importantly, it is unfortunately in our nature to corrupt any political system in existence because these are human constructs. (It's a pity that humanity's proclivity for capitalism too often over rules our social conscience.) All disshait ain't a fault o' de system – it's the user!

As Phil Fitzpatrick points out the form of democracy PNG takes up may be different from that experienced in other nations. And this is a point which I believe we should keep in mind.

We have by hook or by crook, determined and will continue to determine the outcome of our democracy – good or bad. We will likewise affect any other system we come up with.

No matter how bad we think things are we should keep in mind that we arrived here via a democratic process. We have only ourselves to blame. And it is preferable that we return to good via a democratic process.

On the other hand I also agree entirely with Martyn's call for political reform.

In PNG democracy is continually tested by master puppeteers who play in the shadows; the democratic processes are twisted by our adept and/or inept public servants and service mechanisms; and the guiding principles have been thwarted, in most cases intentionally, by our past and present parliaments.

But those actors and their actions should not shake our belief in the value of democracy over other political modes in existence or theoretical, nor should it mean that because we have not yet had our ‘victory at the polls’ that we should quit democratic elections.

Perhaps we are frustrated because we have not used democratic principles and processes properly. But have we truly exhausted all the avenues available to us?

As Martyn Namorong commented, “Political reform is what is needed including changes to electoral cycles and electoral boundaries as well as the levels of government and the powers of each level.

Indeed more focus should be on broader participation of citizens in decision making as opposed to reliance on dumb incompetent political "leaders" to provide leadership.”

Yes. So we need some strong political generals.

Strong generals do not balk at the loss of a few skirmishes or battles when the war is not yet won.

We need to find those generals.

We will need them for the political reform that we call for – to clean out the rot in our government systems.

Parliamentary pandemonium, overt government corruption, extensive bribery networks, election fixing-threats and violence etc., to me these are all symptoms of a disease infecting the system.

The disease vectors are using desperate cunning and extreme efforts to resist the inevitable change that will come about when the correct processes are followed and better leadership teams arise.

We are the people responsible for enabling and ensuring that those better leadership teams do arise. We cannot conveniently divorce ourselves of this responsibility by contriving to discard a system that we have not used properly.

Because securing better leadership may take more than one election the responsibility to ensure this rests with us now, before, during, after and in spite of the next national elections.

Democratic elections are cyclic one-off events where voters and candidates engage fully and freely, and it is every citizen's right to behave and vote as they please during that time.

The responsibility of citizenship however is an ever after occupation, not a now or never execution.

As Martyn comments further, "My view therefore is more active citizenship and greater participation of civil society in the affairs of nation building as opposed to reliance on institutions of the state."

The greater and longer term strategy we need is to affect citizen responsibility positively and to support avenues for their active participation.

The national elections are an honourable path to take, and good leaders such as Dame Carol Kidu and Hon. Gary Juffa have walked it well before.

Their past victories prove that when we use the system correctly the best outcome may still eventuate. Don't let others like them down now.

We can still win this war. We must keep the faith. And that is something which money cannot buy.

Comments (verbatim from bottom up)

Sourced from Keith Jackson and Friends: PNG Attitude

http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2016/01/what-i-can-do-for-my-country-is-keep-the-faith.html

Mathias - thanks for your appreciation.

The actors are, from the top, political representatives, civil society, community organizations, and us.

As writer's we have a critical and much larger and deeper role to play.

We will need to help our people step out from under the shadow of the past - the perspectives, mentality, history and culture of lassitude.

That's going to be quite a job - so we better start now.

You are right of course, we need to act now.

Our action now is to begin the process of generational change.

Posted by: Michael Dom | 20 January 2016 at 10:16 AM

Michael, that was truly a wonderful article rather THE middle path PNG needs now to get out of its current rough rides? Another

question; Which actors are you looking for to traverse that middle path?

Many years ago our early leaders, rather pushed on without any alternative, to accepted the British Westminster system. Here we are riding potholes and complaining a way through. Maybe our society of tribes and clans and how decisions were arrived at through consensus - a pure form of democracy - could not exactly fit and work with this borrowed system, maybe we should have integrated ours with theirs and arrive at THE middle path?

What ever the path, we have not found that yet and it will yet take a while. While we work on finding THE path, this nation PNG would be riddled with thieves, natives as well as ol arapla, who would have done so much damage that the pot holes will now become hills and gullies. By the time we arrive at an answer, our resources will certainly be depleted.

We have come 40 years and our leaders have squandered billions and achieved less. Look at West African states, states that had all the gold floating on oil and gas covered with rain forests. Na nau? today? They are some of the poorest people on earth. Americans and Europeans went in there and came out leaving behind them deserts. Now the Asians are doing damages around the world, and in PNG, where Euro-Americans left off.

For our generation, this generation, if we must act now, we must act to save our resources before our children and their children are poverty stricken living on their lands that has no trees but deserts.

My thoughts on your wonderful article.

Posted by: Mathias Kin | 20 January 2016 at 12:14 AM

Martyn - I appreciate your views and always enjoy your forthright and frank comments, especially those that cause discomfort. It's 'the writer's jab'.

Sometimes the extreme end of things needs to be made apparent so that we fully understand what we are about. How else do we know the middle path?

Thank for the encouragement, Phil, this is a road map of sorts, or at least the start of one. We're still sketching in the layout but there are a lot of smarter folks around who may also contribute.

Thank you, Flora Pondrilei - Independent Candidate for Division 7 - Cairns Regional Council 2016.

But I don't understand your statement that "democratic processes only work effectively in homogenous societies". That sounds indefensible to me. How homogenous is your electorate?

As for leaders, electoral process and parliamentarians:

Leadership is a role NOT a position.

Parliamentarians are glorified public servants - that is their position – holding a public office.

The electoral process is how we choose to glorify these public servants by making them parliamentarians, i.e. our representatives.

Parliament is where we hope these public servants demonstrate some leadership, i.e. properly carry out the Role that their Position dictates by Representing Our Interests.

Unfortunately, PNG has many rich parliamentarians and the same number of very poor leaders.

Flora, your use of the terms 'poverty and illiteracy' is like the wielding of a double edged sword.

Firstly, I don't believe that 'poverty and illiteracy' is necessarily the precursor to an inability "to discern what makes for good leadership". Smart people may choose dumb-ass leaders too.

Secondly, while 'poverty and illiteracy' are causes in the socioeconomic context, they are not the vilest reasons that people's minds are often "clouded by the needs for instant gratification".

Greed (for power), gluttony (beer-guts and all), lust (for links to the perks), vindictiveness and malice (towards 'betters'), these are some of the more vile reasons people's minds are clouded.

Otherwise it seems like were blaming the less educated and financially insecure portions of our society for picking the wrong bastard guys.

Also, I think agenda such as family connections, business and social debt, customary relations/interactions, favours and preconceived favouritism and etc. are more important in the Melanesian context than 'poverty and illiteracy' alone.

While I agree that tribalism is a cause for concern at election time, I believe that this source of ethnic unity can still be useful for socio-political redistribution of power.

We just haven't gone about it the right way yet.

It's unfortunate that we mix the terms politician and leader when it is abundantly clear by their actions that one prostitutes while the other prosecutes.

We do need good political leaders and that may be the oxymoron of the year.

Posted by: Michael Dom | 19 January 2016 at 06:25 PM

Democratic processes work effectively in homogeneous societies. I do not believe PNG is one. That said, democracy is what PNG has to work with.

But we must bear in mind that one does not become a leader through the electoral process alone. One must demonstrate leadership qualities and capabilities before becoming a parliamentarian.

I also think that poverty and illiteracy contributes to PNG's dilemma in selecting good leaders. When you have a large portion of a population faced with these two challenges, their ability to discern what makes for good leadership can be clouded by the needs for instant gratification i.e cash for votes, or the promise of person benefits.

If 80 percent of the population is poor and illiterate, their vote is determined by their immediate needs, not the needs of the nation state or province. Thus one could conclude that this 80 percent of the population determines who governs PNG.

Additionally, it appears that the allegiances of voters are quite tribal - tribalism reigns supreme thus the idea of national and provincial interests, and working toward those ends are not important for many.

Part of the shift in mindset has to be that leaders lead for the provinces & the nation state of PNG; for all the constituents not just for allies.

You have open members and governors: one prosecutes the case for the state, the other for the province.

Independent Candidate for Division 7 - Cairns Regional Council 2016

Posted by: Flora Pondrilei | 18 January 2016 at 04:34 PM

That's a great road map for the future Michael.

Somehow there has to be a way found to get this map out to the people so they can act on it.

I don't know how this can be done. The churches maybe?

Posted by: Phil Fitzpatrick | 18 January 2016 at 09:24 AM

Thanks Michael

My views on politics obviously represent an extreme distrust but I suppose as with all things there's always a middle path that is better than two extremes and you've articulated that middle path well.

Posted by: Martyn Namorong | 18 January 2016 at 07:58 AM

On electing leaders: who wrongs first, the people or the State?

PNG may not be a failed state but the State has consistently failed its people.

We are still surviving but how can we thrive? We are responsible for the state we are in.

“Customary land tenure and the subsistence economy cushion’s the majority of the population against poor monetary or fiscal policy or global economic downturns.”

This is one of PNG’s strengths – the fundamental independence of the vast majority of rural farming households. We can still grow much of our own food and provide shelter for our families.

However, this is also a weakness when rural farming households are dependent on the State for essential services such as health, education, transport infrastructure, access to markets and finance facilities for small to medium enterprises.

Urban households are also disempowered when there is a lack of growth in the domestic economy, fewer jobs, less reinvestment into small business and little means for the majority of working class to improve their lot in life.

The State disempowers its people from becoming prosperous therefore even those with the capacity to thrive continue to survive and subsist along with the majority of people who live in remote outposts.

Great opportunity rests in enhancing the development of agricultural production.

A major threat is that individual farmers and farming communities may continue to try to act alone and not band together to foster collective actions within their value chains, for their mutual benefit.

“Papua New Guineans are good at making individual efforts for the collective good. We need to re-ignite our passion and purposely take this personal journey.”

Yes. Grow the grass roots circle of influence and within that sphere a leadership group will emerge because those will be the individuals who consistently act to return the benefits to the collective.

“The changes Papua New Guineans want to see in their lives and communities will come when people act based on what they can do rather than dwell on what they’ve been told they cannot do.”

What we can do is limited only by our imaginations. That’s dependent on individuals.

Next we need to gather the required intelligence. That’s dependent on the collective.

Then we must encourage the desire to succeed. That needs a mutually beneficial goal.

Then we need a *smart* action plan. That requires cooperation.

But to direct our actions and implement the plan we need good leadership.

Some argue that democracy is a dead horse and that rather we have an autocracy bordering on dictatorship.

But assuredly this latter kind of rule was not a recognizable aspect of PNG's past Melanesian societies. To the best knowledge of knowledge our societies were egalitarian, independent households, interdependent tribes and clans, mostly hierarchical albeit politically less organized.

We however live in 'a hybrid of tradition and modernity'. Interdependence was a characteristic of our ancestor's tribal life.

Why should it be impossible to achieve in our neo-tribal life?

For democracy to flourish in Papua New Guinea we must transcend independence to interdependence.

The State may have failed its people, but do the people also fail their State?

Comments (verbatim from bottom up)

Sourced from Keith Jackson and Friends: PNG Attitude
http://asopa.typepad.com/asopa_people/2016/01/on-electing-leaders-whose-wrong-first-the-people-or-the-state.html

My friend, Ellison, thank you for your kind words. That's agreed, working with the strengths of indigenous people is important in policy development.

Posted by: Michael Dom | 28 January 2016 at 06:07 PM

Most Governments do not recognize the power that lies on their indigenous people and most often than not make wrong decisions especially on foreign policies. Therefore, people will always not fail but the state most time fail their own people.

Good thought Don.

Posted by: Ellison Musimuko | 28 January 2016 at 05:18 PM

Every country has the government it deserves - Joseph de Maistre

Posted by: Bernard Corden | 27 January 2016 at 12:33 PM

Gary Juffa is doing a great job - no one better.

Wish we had more like him.

Posted by: Michael Dom | 24 January 2016 at 06:24 PM

Michael and John,

There has never been a better opportunity than to advertise the true situation and educate the people that are being used.

Just look at what Gary Juffa is not just saying but actually doing.

Governor Juffa is setting the benchmark for others to emulate.

Posted by: Paul Oates | 24 January 2016 at 09:00 AM

John, your comment strikes at the core of our fiasco, "gullible and ill-educated people and those who are hell-bent of abusing them".

Posted by: Michael Dom | 24 January 2016 at 07:56 AM

Handouts from politicians even through the distribution of the DSIP funds have painted a very bad picture that people are already not capable, and must now wait upon or look around for easier opportunities.

Blame gullible and ill-educated people and those who are hell-bent of abusing them.

Posted by: John K Kamasua | 23 January 2016 at 09:29 PM

Well Michael, therein lies the rub. To be fully informed clearly enables better decision making.

However if the only options available are a choice between poor or no management then blind Freddy could predict the outcome.

It is clearly better to keep the broad PNG population uniformed if you don't want to have them question any decision or any mistake you make and if your objective is to deceive, gain uncontested power or if you are just a lazy and indolent spiv.

If those who do know what better alternatives there are available but don't publically speak out, who will? The problem in PNG is that any public utterance will of course be looked at through the local cultural prism that has never really altered. It will inevitably meet resistance from those who stand to lose what they have so far gained or hope to gain. PNG's homegrown culture of public shame should then be considered.

The challenge is for those PNGians who do know proven, better ways of managing government and the public service need to be able to translate that knowledge transparently through the PNG cultural prism and and effectively publicize that knowledge.

Outsiders like myself, even given our knowledge and expressed concern for PNG and her people, can only look on and hope we can help in a very limited capacity. The danger is always that it's easy to be critical when one isn't directly involved however there is really no way we can be at the moment.

Poroman, 'Nhil carborundum reducim'

Posted by: Paul Oates | 23 January 2016 at 11:53 AM

It's somewhat insulting to think of the mass of my people being so simplistic as to not comprehend what good government and coherent policy is about.

But I'll readily admit that most people are less knowledgeable.

Another way of looking at that is that my people are less informed. Whose job is it to inform them?

Meanwhile PNG's elite writer's pussy-foot around with organizing a competition - to what ultimate purpose do we write, mere titillation?

Small-scale = community level, small organizations, big differences.

Which is what we hoped the Crocodile Prize would lead to. Well, SWEP was a flop.

Powerful is what writers can be. Wake up.

Posted by: Michael Dom | 23 January 2016 at 09:26 AM

A very succinct postulation Ian.

Posted by: Paul Oates | 23 January 2016 at 06:47 AM

Apart from the practical difficulties in voting freely, can we really believe that the mass of people have a realistic notion of what good government, or coherent government policy, could mean?

It seems to be hoping for a lot. Traditional governance wasn't/isn't about development (that is, change), right? So it's not much of a model, even if it weren't manipulated by unscrupulous politicians. The experience of 'government' before and since Independence was really an experience of administration -- public authorities not representing popular choices in any clear way.

So people don't already know, or remember, what government can be. They have to imagine it. Without much in the way of media, or education, or knowledge of the world. It's asking a lot.

Maybe small, or smaller-scale, happy examples? (Oro?) Maybe a really powerfully motivating movement?

Posted by: Ian Fraser | 22 January 2016 at 08:58 PM

Acknowledgements

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- Keith Jackson & Friends: PNG Attitude, <http://asopa.typepad.com/>
- Crocodile Prize, www.crocodileprize.org
- The 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 Crocodile Prize Anthology
- A Collection of Poetry – At Another Crossroads, University of Papua New Guinea Press, ISBN: 978-9980879219.
- The Musing of an Assistant Pig Keeper, ISBN-13: 978-1490505978 (CreateSpace-Assigned); ISBN-10: 1490505970
- The BBC 2014 Commonwealth Games Poetry Postcards
- Soaba's Storyboard <http://soabasstoryboard.blogspot.com.au/>
- Poetry Soup, www.poetrysoup.com
- Stella Magazine (PNG)
- PNG Resources Magazine
- The National Newspaper Writer's forum (the column was discontinued)

About the author



Michael Theophilus Dom was born in Port Moresby to Simbu parents in November 1977. He lives in Lae Morobe Province and works as a scientist in the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI).

He is an avid reader, writer and commentator on the website Keith Jackson & Friends: PNG Attitude and has entered many pieces from his work in PNG's

national literary competition The Crocodile Prize.

Michael won the Poetry Award of The Crocodile Prize in 2012 for his sonnet *I met a pig farmer the other day*. His first collection of poetry, *At another Crossroads*, was published by the UPNG Press in 2013. Michael's second collection, *The Musing of an Assistant Pig Keeper*, and two chapbooks, *O Arise!* and *Send words as gifts*, were published on the CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Michael's terza rima poem *The Political Economy of a Pig Farmers Life* was printed as a BBC Poetry Postcard during the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. In 2016 his poem *Lucky Little Lizard* was published by the Commonwealth Education Trust in their children's book *A River of Stories*, a collection of stories and poems from 53 commonwealth nations.

Reviews

“A poem is a powerful weapon, especially in the hands of a master like Michael Dom. One day the politicians will rue their deafness.”

*Phil Fitzpatrick
Author & publisher Pukupuk Publishing*

“I assure you that you will experience the anguish and mischief of PNG politics in your mind’s eye and equally a hope for a brighter future in this work.”

*Kelakapora Sil Bolkin
Author of *The Flight of the Galkope**

“...the end result of struggle may be a real threat to privilege and entitlement. Michael Dom uses poetry to reveal such truths without ever glossing over the difficulties of moving to a better state.”

*Keith Jackson AM – Adjunct Professor
School of Journalism & Communications
The University of Queensland*