



Rivalry between islands: Quibbling siblings or a core-periphery centrifuge?

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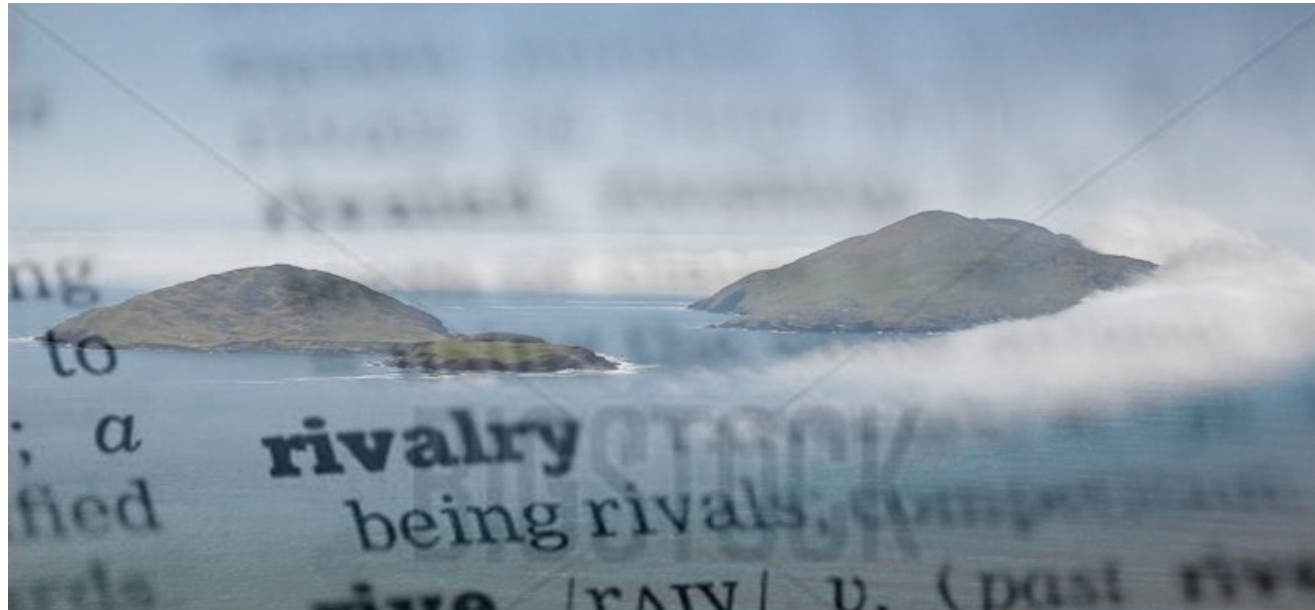
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Background

Between 2011-2015 a Marsden Fund supported team from four universities (VUW, MU, USP, UNC) investigated 'policy sovereignty of Pacific islands'.

Unexpectedly – we noted islanders often commented on rivalry they felt towards other islands in their nation, or with whom they shared a metropole.

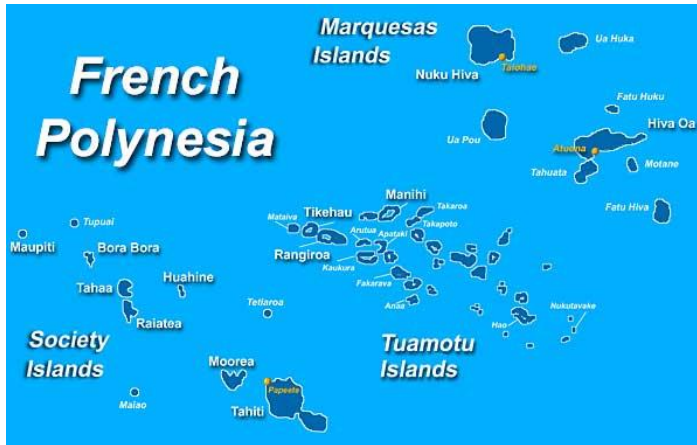


“The two islands are very different ... Futunians believe that Wallisians want to do everything their way without taking account of the Futunian way. I am against that, I am the Bishop of both islands. But it goes on continuously. Futunians now demand to have their own Catholic Education Department.” – *Bishop Ghislain de Rasilly (2015)*



Inter-island rivalry

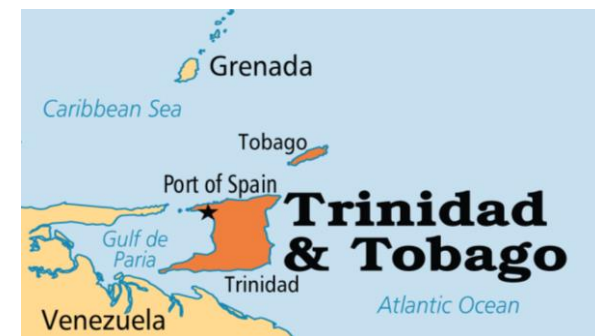
The Bishop's comments are not unique to Wallis and Futuna. Similar rivalry is known among other islands that form other Pacific's nations and territories.



“Today, in the streets of Pape’ete, or outside a café, two Tahitians overhearing a couple of Marquesans speaking their own language may refer to them as cannibals, savages or *Nu’uhiva amu ta’ata*, Tahitian for ‘man-eating Marquesans’.” (Mawyer, 2008:380)

And such a rivalry also surface regularly on Caribbean Islands:

“There were always concerns that obnoxious Trinidadians would come to Tobago and litter our beaches.” – S Boodan, SDMS Party Tobago, 2013



Inter-island rivalry

A literature review suggests rivalry among ‘sibling’ islands within Pacific nations and territories tends to be characterised as tensions driven by ‘good-humoured provincialism’ or, on a bad day, ‘narrow-minded parochialism’.

In contrast, Caribbean literature underscores how these tensions drive political separatism:

“Rarely are inter-island relations free of tension and political conflict, the resource sharing balanced, or the political administration equitable” (Conway, 2008: 55)

“Inter-island antipathy and rivalry, and insular particularism, seem to be primary motivators for change” (Clegg, 2012: 436).

In 2016, a new team of researchers from four universities (VUW, MU, USP, UH) decided to have a closer look at “inter-island rivalry” in the Pacific.



Four observations: 1. Island polities are pluralities

1. Most island polities – whether independent or sub-national jurisdiction to a metropole – comprise at least two, and often many, islands.



Four observations: 2. Island polities are colonial legacies

2. Most contemporary island polities are products of colonisation. Often, during colonisation, islands with distinct historical trajectories and socio-cultural profiles were clustered together as one administrative unit.



Four observations: 3. Some island polities split at birth...

3. Some of these clustered islands separated from each other at the moment of independence in the 1970s and 1980s.



Others did not separate, but split over the question of independence: some going for sovereignty, others opting to remain with the metropole.



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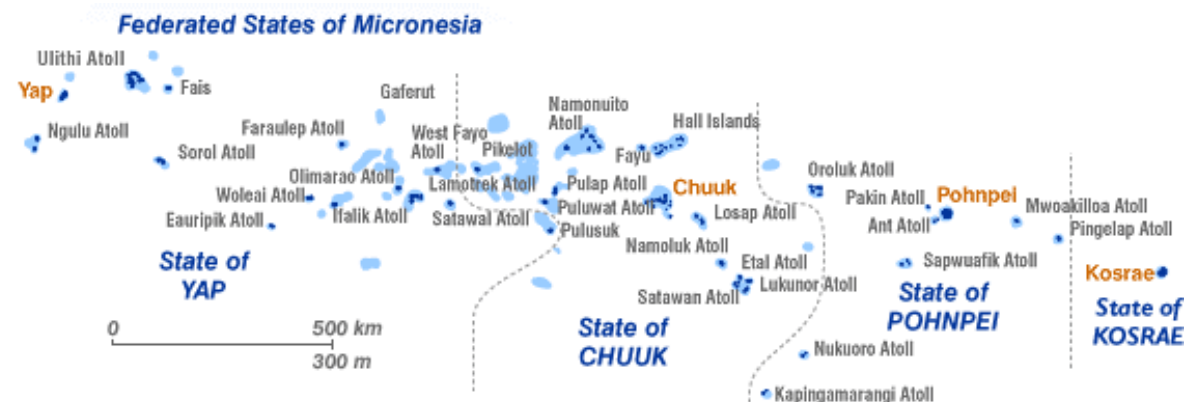


Four observations: 4. ...other island polities divorce

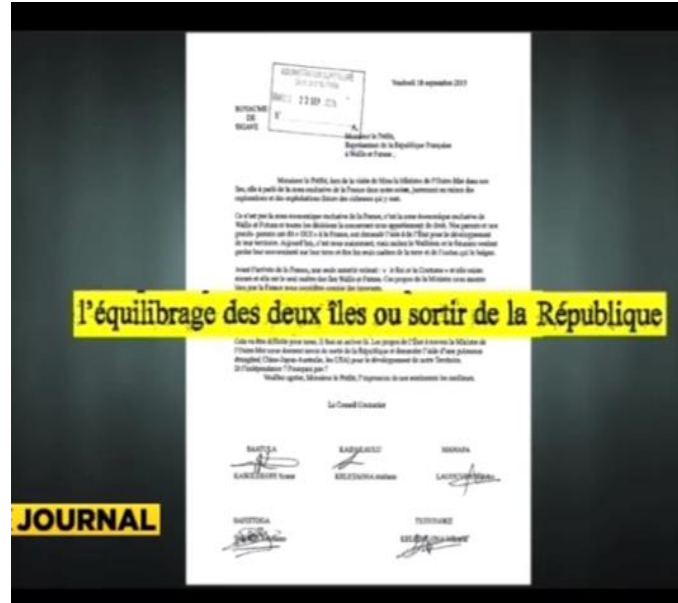


In 2009, the clustered British Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension, and Tristan da Cunha broke up: the latter two resenting larger St Helena.

In 2015, people of Chuuk in the FSM planned a referendum on secession. An executive order by the Governor stopped it, just weeks before.



Four observations: 4. ...other island polities divorce



In 2015, Futuna's Customary Council wrote to the French administration it wanted equal footing with Wallis...

“Or we will leave the Republic.”

On 15 June 2019 there will be a referendum on Bougainville's separation – independence – from PNG.



Revisiting inter-island rivalry

The team will explore in 2017-2018 the character of inter-island rivalry in the Pacific – and compare findings with Caribbean and Atlantic rivalry.

Seeking collaboration with Pacific researchers or journalists, interviews will be held with respected local “opinion-holders” on 4½ questions:

1. Are there human-made differences – in terms of economy or infrastructure – between your island and the other island(s)?
2. Are there differences between the character of the people on your island and the people on the other island(s)?
3. What do you like most about the other island(s)? If there are differences, is that a problem?
4. Have you lived on the other island(s)? Is your family connected to the other island(s)?



4½. Do you know any jokes about the other island?



Revisiting inter-island rivalry

These 4½ questions will be asked of ‘opinion-holders’ of five groups on each of the two or more islands in a group.
(Where possible, a man and a woman.)

- Opinion-holders
1. Customary leaders

2. Religious leaders

3. Elected representatives

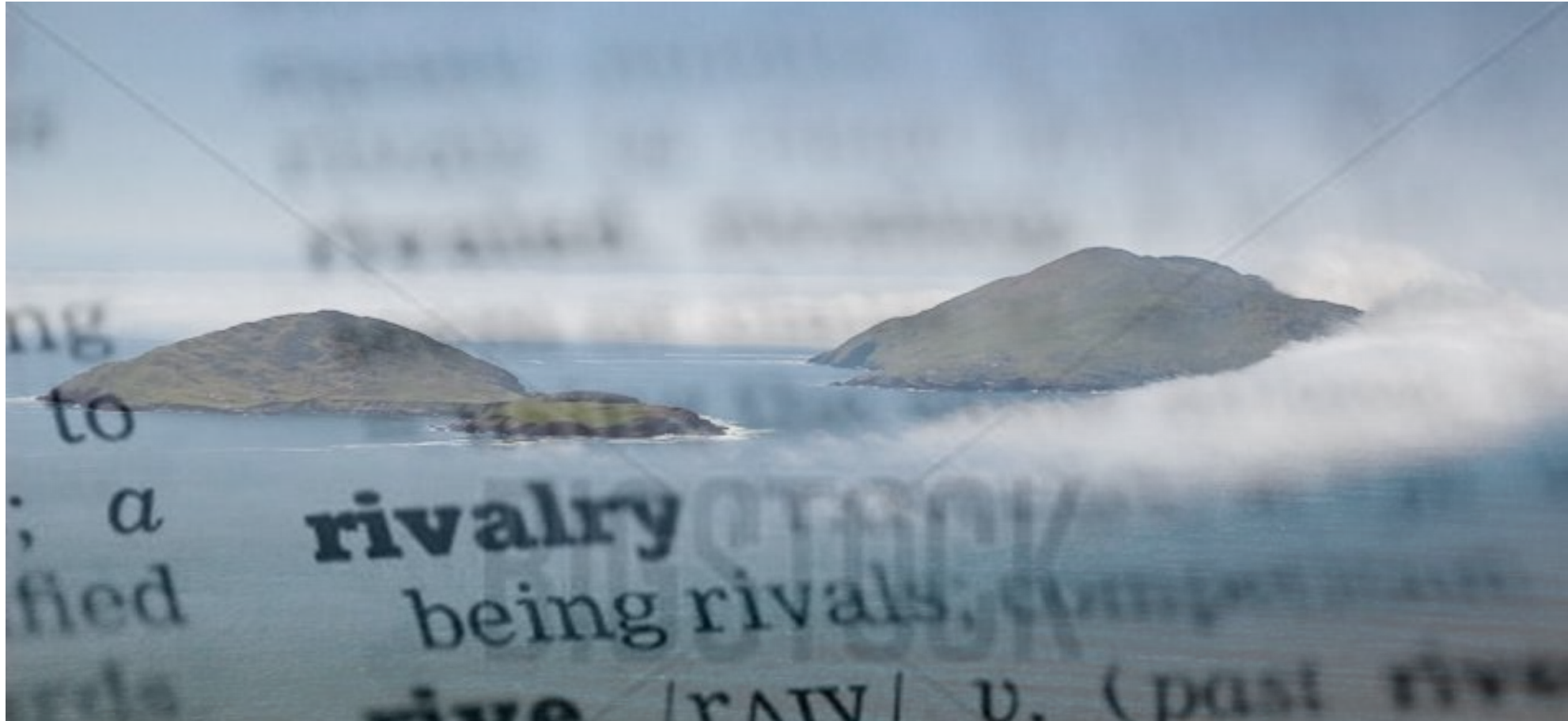
4. Business people

5. Teachers

Tentatively, the following six pairs of islands have been identified:

Non-self-governing islands	Sovereign states
French Polynesia: Tahiti and Marquesas (or Îles Tuamotu-Gambier)	Samoa: Upolu and Savai'i
Tokelau: comparing among Fakaofo, Atafu and Nukunonu	Vanuatu: Tanna and Efate
Wallis & Futuna: (Interviews done in 2015 as trial)	FSM: Chuuk and Pohnpei





Please be in touch if you would like to know more or participate.

