

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Early Contacts Between Bellona and Rennell Islands and the Outside World

BELLONA AND RENNELL ISLANDS, TWO POLYNESIAN OUTLIERS IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS, were among the least visited places in the South Pacific before Christianity was introduced there in 1938. This fact has since made them of considerable interest to natural and social scientists, and there have been a number of publications about them in recent years.¹ However, none has included a systematic study of contact with the two islands in pre-mission times. This paper attempts to fill that gap.²

The results of a computer simulation of Polynesian drift voyages published in 1973 suggested that the location of Rennell and Bellona to the southwest of San Cristobal made them most unlikely terminal points for such voyages. 'It is virtually impossible', the authors of the simulation said, 'to drift directly to Rennell or Bellona from our Polynesian starting points'. They added that, except for Tikopia, from which there was 'a very low contact probability', no other Polynesian Outliers seemed to offer much promise as starting points for drift voyages.³ In fact, apart from traditions about the first Polynesian arrivals, the oral traditions of Bellona and Rennell speak of 10 different canoes arriving from other parts of the Pacific in pre-European times; and the arrival of many others, not remembered in tradition, seems likely.

The present islanders claim that their forefathers settled both Bellona and Rennell about 24 generations ago from 'Ubeangango (literally West 'Ubea; probably 'Uvea in the Loyalty Islands) and from 'Ubeamatangi (literally East 'Ubea; probably 'Uvea or Wallis Island).⁴ Oral traditions also speak of canoes arriving at Bellona from the Duff Islands in generation nine, at Rennell from two unknown starting points about generation 12, at Rennell from Rotuma in generation 14, at Rennell from the Duff Islands in generation 19, and at Rennell from Tikopia (two voyages) in generation 20. Two voyages to Bellona from unknown starting points at some unspecified time in the past

¹ For studies of the ecology, culture and language of Bellona and Rennell Islands, see Sofus Christiansen, *Subsistence on Bellona Island (Mungiki)* (Copenhagen 1975); Samuel H. Elbert, *Dictionary of the Language of Rennell and Bellona, Part 1, Rennelrese and Bellonese to English* (Copenhagen 1975); Samuel H. Elbert, Rolf Kuschel and Toomasī Taupongi, *Dictionary of the Language of Rennell and Bellona, Part 2, English to Rennelrese and Bellonese* (Copenhagen 1981); Samuel H. Elbert and Torben Monberg, *From the Two Canoes: Oral Traditions of Rennell and Bellona Islands* (Copenhagen and Honolulu 1965); Rolf Kuschel, *Vengeance is Their Reply: Blood Feuds and Homicides on Bellona Island* (1988); Torben Monberg, *The Religion of Bellona Island* (Copenhagen 1966); Torben Wollfi (ed.), *The Natural History of Rennell Island, British Solomon Islands, I* (Copenhagen 1958). Results of archaeological investigations can be found in M. Chikamori, 'The early Polynesian settlement on Rennell Islands', *Occasional Papers of the Department of Archaeology and Ethnology* (Tokyo 1975), 1-40; J. I. Poulsen, 'Outlier archaeology: Bellona. A preliminary report on field work and radiocarbon dates', *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, 7 (1972), 184-205.

² This study was sponsored by the Danish Research Council for the Humanities. A special thanks to Robert Langdon, who made several constructive suggestions on an earlier draft of the paper and who procured material concerning whalers who sighted or had contact with Rennell and Bellona.

³ M. Levison, R. G. Ward and J. W. Webb, *The Settlement of Polynesia: A Computer Simulation* (Minneapolis 1973), 59.

⁴ For an assessment of the oral traditions, see Kuschel, *Vengeance*, section 1.3.4.

are also recorded in the tradition.⁵ The approximate distance from the Duff Islands to Rennell and Bellona is 777 km; from Tikopia to Rennell, it is 963 km; and from Rotuma to Rennell, 1,892 km.⁶ All the identified places of origin referred to in the traditions are within an area 4° N and 4° S of Bellona and Rennell.

There is good reason to believe that prehistoric contact between the people of San Cristobal and Bellona/Rennell was not infrequent. According to the missionary C. E. Fox, people from San Cristobal 'often used to go to both [Rennell] and Bellona in old days'. They knew them as Amoraha and Amokiki respectively.⁷ Prehistoric voyages from San Cristobal have also been discussed by others.⁸ In historical times, two visits from Tikopia are on record, one in about 1907 and one in 1926.⁹ Five or six generations before them, a canoe known as *haka hakataatopetope*, which is said to have been a copy of a Tikopia canoe, was destroyed on Bellona.¹⁰ About 10 generations ago, 'a group of black men and women' is said to have arrived at Bellona from Taumako in the Reef Islands to the east. They were offered food and shelter, but did not linger and 'some sailed away'.¹¹ The anthropologist Alphonse Riesenfeld recorded traditional tales on Sikaiana of voyages to Rennell;¹² while S. M. Lambert recorded a Rennellese story about a party of invading Tongans, all of whom were killed but one.¹³ The survivor lived among the Rennellese until he died. However, those 'Tongans' probably did not come from Tonga as the Rennellese and Bellonese use that name to describe all islands to the east of them.¹⁴ In fact, Lambert's 'Tongan' invasion may correspond to the traditional voyage referred to above as originating at Rotuma 10 generations ago, as the tale of that voyage also mentions a single survivor being allowed to live on Rennell.

The anthropologist E. Paravicini collected tales on Guadalcanal of the eviction from that island of two warring chieftains. One sailed to San Cristobal, the other to Rennell where he married. Later, women from San Cristobal were sent to Bellona. As it was then uninhabited, the women mated with flying foxes.¹⁵ The last part of the story is, of course, a myth, but it may well be a clue to a minor invasion from Guadalcanal at some stage.

All evidence indicates that the Bellonese themselves have never been very outward bound, probably because they ran out of large trees to dig out seaworthy canoes soon after arriving there. Nevertheless, seven voyages to other islands are reported in current tales. Four of these relate to journeys to Guadalcanal and San Cristobal, which lie at a distance of 164 km and 191 km respectively.¹⁶ The periods of these voyages

⁵ All voyages are referred to in Elbert and Monberg, *From the Two Canoes*, texts 217, 218, 224 (Duff Islands), 226 (Tikopia), 221, 222 (Rotuma), 215, 216 (unknown to Rennell), 225 (unknown to Bellona). See also Raymond Firth, 'A native voyage to Rennell' [from Tikopia], *Oceania*, 2 (1931), 179-190, and Daniel Tuhunuku, Notebook VI, 1971 (in preparation), 56-67, for the voyages from Rotuma and the unknown starting points.

⁶ All distances given in this paper are from Christiansen, *Subsistence on Bellona*, 13.

⁷ C. E. Fox, 'Bellona and Rennell Islands', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 27 (1918), 225.

⁸ G. Thilenius, 'Ethnographische Ergebnisse aus Melanesien', *Novo Acta. Abhandlungen der Kaiserlichen Leopold-Carolina Deutschen Akademie der Naturforscher*, 80 (No. 1) (1902), 1-102. C. M. Woodford, 'On some little-known Polynesian settlements in the neighbourhood of the Solomon Islands', *Geographical Journal*, 48 (1916), 47.

⁹ Elbert and Monberg, *From the Two Canoes*, text 226 (notes); Firth, 'A native voyage', 190.

¹⁰ Kuschel, *Vengeance*, text 44.

¹¹ R. G. Roberts, 'The Children of Kaitu'u', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 67 (1958), 8.

¹² Alphonse Riesenfeld, *The Megalithic Culture of Melanesia* (Leiden 1950), 186.

¹³ S. M. Lambert, 'Health survey of Rennell and Bellona Islands', *Oceania*, 2 (1931), 138.

¹⁴ Elbert and Monberg, *From the Two Canoes*, text 223 (notes).

¹⁵ E. Paravicini, *Reisen in den Britischen Salomonen* (Frauenfeld 1931), 103; see also Riesenfeld, *Megalithic Culture*, 193.

¹⁶ Elbert and Monberg, *From the Two Canoes*, texts 228, 229, 230; Tuhunuku, Notebook VI, texts 88, 89.

are not indicated in the traditions. Other traditions tell of a voyage to Mungua (probably Murua or Woodlark Island), 796 km away, in generation eight, and to 'Ubea and back immediately after the settlement of Bellona.¹⁷ A voyage from Bellona to an unknown destination in generation 12 is also spoken of.¹⁸ The voyage to Mungua is said to have been made by one Ngaakei in the 16th century. The outward trip took five days and the return eight. The voyage to 'Ubea and back, which would have covered a distance of about 5,300 km, is said to have been made to obtain turmeric for the islanders' rituals. About 1900 a Bellonese canoe is reported to have drifted to Gatukai (Ngaatokai), at the southeast end of New Georgia in the Solomons. But all on board were killed by the local inhabitants.¹⁹

None of the drift voyages to Bellona/Rennell nor those from it to other islands and back appear to have left any important marks on the islanders' religious or social institutions or patterns of behaviour. On the other hand, Ngaakei is said to have brought back yams and bananas from his voyage to Woodlark as well as the important place name, Ghongau; and the Bellonese are said to have learned from the Tikopians how to build the characteristic canoe, *baka hakataatopetope*.

It is not certain when Bellona and Rennell were discovered by Europeans or who the discoverer was. Some sources claim that Captain Thomas Butler made the discovery in the *Walpole* in 1794 or 1801.²⁰ Others credit Captain William Wilkinson of the *Indispensable* in 1790.²¹ In fact, neither captain seems to deserve the title of discoverer. Butler's 'Chart of the Western Part of the Pacific' of 1799 shows that the *Walpole* never went near the Solomon Islands in sailing to Tinian from the 'S.W. Cape of New Holland' in 1794.²² On the other hand, although the same chart shows that the *Indispensable*, Captain Wilkinson, did pass between the then 'Nameless Islands' of Bellona and Rennell, it does not seem likely that the voyage was in 1790 as the chart indicates. According to the historian Colin Jack-Hinton, the voyage took place in 1794 when Wilkinson was accompanied by the American vessel *Halcyon*. This appears to be correct as the *Indispensable's* first visit to Sydney was in May 1794.²³

The first indisputable observations of Bellona and Rennell were made by Captain Mathew Boyd in the ship *Bellona* in 1793 after he had completed a voyage from England to Australia with a cargo of meat and wine, plus settlers and convicts.²⁴ Boyd left Sydney for China on 20 February 1793. Rennell Island came in sight on 3 March. Boyd's log records:

At ½ past 8 A.M. saw the Land which we supposed to be the Island of Arsacides,²⁵ at noon we discovered it was a much smaller Island being only about 12 Leagues long. It lays nearly

¹⁷ Elbert and Monberg, *From the Two Canoes*, texts 227, 124.

¹⁸ Kuschel, *Vengeance*, text 13.

¹⁹ Woodford, 'On some little-known Polynesian settlements', 47.

²⁰ E.g., W. T. Brigham, *An Index to the Islands of the Pacific Ocean* (Honolulu 1900), 221; A. C. Gaspari, *Handbuch der Erdbeschreibung* (Weimar 1825), XXIII, 407; H. I. Hogbin, 'A note on Rennell Island', *Oceania*, 2 (1931-32), 174; S. H. Ray, 'Polynesian languages of the Solomon Islands', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 26 (1917), 170; G. L. Domeny De Rienzi, *Océanie ou Cinquième Partie du Monde* (Paris 1838), 383.

²¹ Brigham, *An Index*, 128, mentions both Butler and Wilkinson as the discoverers of Bellona; A. G. Findlay, *A Directory for the Navigation of the Pacific Ocean* (London 1851), II, 1017; Sofus Christiansen, 'The mapping of Rennell and Bellona Islands', in Torben Wolff (ed.), *The Natural History of Rennell Island* (Copenhagen 1968), V, 39.

²² R. Laurie and J. Whittle, 'Butler's chart of the western part of the Pacific' (printed 20 May 1799), in *The Complete East India Pilot or Oriental Navigator* (London 1800), plate 122.

²³ C. Jack-Hinton, *The Search for the Islands of Solomon, 1567-1838* (Oxford 1969), 323.

²⁴ F. M. Bladen, *Historical Records of New South Wales* (Sydney 1893), II, 15-16, 223.

²⁵ Probably the western Solomons, especially New Georgia.

ESE & WNW, the middle of it by our observations in the Lat. of 11° S 36 Long. 160:10 East of Greenwich.²⁶ [Modern instruments give Rennell's position as between lat. 11°34' & 11°47' S. and long. 159°55' & 160°37' E.]²⁷

Boyd's log states that Bellona was sighted at 1 p.m. the following day, bearing 'NBE distant 6 Leagues'. He estimated it to be about eight miles long and seven leagues NNW of Rennell. The modern measurement of Bellona is 11.5 km or 7.2 miles.

The native names of the two islands are Mungiki (Bellona) and Mugaba (Rennell). Early renderings of them include Moi-ki, Mou-iki, Muigi, Mo iki and Mongiki on the one hand, and Monggana, Mongaua, Mongava, Mou-راها and Muava on the other.²⁸ Rennell is known as Muuke on Guadalcanal,²⁹ Fenuahala on Sikaiana and Totohuke on San Cristobal.³⁰ Bellona is called Amokiki on San Cristobal.³¹ But what is the origin of the European names? A chart published in 1799 with an account of the missionary ship *Duff* in the Pacific refers to both islands as 'Bellonas I.'.³² But Arrowsmith's chart of the previous year applies the name Bellona only to the one now known as such.³³ The earliest record yet found of the name Rennell is in a nautical work by John Purdy published in 1816. He refers to both islands as Rennell's Isles, omitting the name Bellona.³⁴ It has been suggested that Rennell Island was named after Major James Rennell, a geographer and hydrographer who died in 1830.³⁵ But this has not been confirmed.

The two islands were known among the whalers within a few years of their discovery. Vessels known to have sighted them during the whaling era include: *Resource*, 1799; *Caroline*, 1829; *William Hamilton*, 1839; *Two Brothers*, 1860; *Cambria*, 1861; *Gay Head*, 1861; *Japan*, 1869; and *Mathilda Sears*, 1874.³⁶ Some of the crew of the *Caroline* are recorded to have gone ashore at 'Reynolds' Island',³⁷ while the *William Hamilton* 'sent t[w]o boats on shore at bellona island'.³⁸ The boat parties returned four hours later having seen 'one Indian', and he ran so fast that 'we could not see his heels for dust'. These are the first known European landings on Rennell and Bellona.

Stories of a few dramatic encounters with early white visitors survive on both islands. One tells of a dog that came ashore from an unidentified vessel that anchored off Bellona. Its bark frightened the islanders, who threw stones at it and threatened it with their weapons. Observing this from the ship, one of the crew members shot and wounded

²⁶ M. Boyd, Logbook of the *Bellona* to Port Jackson and Whampoa, 14 July 1792 to 29 Sept. 1794, London, British Library, India Office Library and Records, ref. L/MAR/B 353A.

²⁷ Wolff, *The Natural History*, 11.

²⁸ S. H. Ray, 'Mittheilungen über drei Dialekte der Salomon-Inseln', *Zeitschrift für Afrikanischer und Oceanischer Sprachen*, 2 (1896), 59; S. G. C. Knibbs, *The Savage Solomons as they Were and Are* (London 1929), 219; Thilenius, *Ethnographische Ergebnisse*, 16; R. R. Kane, Report to Western Pacific High Commissioner, 3 Feb. 1925, Western Pacific Archives 456/25; Bricham, *An Index*, 137; C. M. Yonge, *Life of Bishop John Coleridge Patteson* (London 1874), X; C. M. Woodford, 'Notes on Rennell Island', *Man*, 23-24 (1907).

²⁹ Paravicini, *Reisen*, 103.

³⁰ Woodford, 'Notes on Rennell', 34.

³¹ Fox, 'Bellona and Rennell', 225.

³² J. Wilson, *A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, 1796-1798* (Graz 1799).

³³ A. Arrowsmith, *Chart of the Pacific Ocean* (London 1798).

³⁴ J. Purdy, *Tables of the Positions . . . to Accompany the 'Oriental Navigator'* (London 1816), 100.

³⁵ Christiansen, 'The mapping of Rennell', 40.

³⁶ See Robert Langdon (ed.), *Where the Whalers Went: An Index to the Pacific Ports and Islands visited by American Whalers (and some other ships) in the 19th Century* (Canberra 1984), 229, 230, 232, for details of Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PMB) microfilms of the logs of all the ships referred to other than the *Caroline*. [Judith Bennett also lists visits to Rennell and Bellona by *The Australian* 1829, *Brothers* 1849, and *Martha* 1855. See Judith A. Bennett, *The Wealth of the Solomons* (Honolulu 1987), 350-2, published after the writing of this paper. Ed.]

³⁷ Honore Foster, 'A Sydney Whaler, 1829-32: The reminiscences of James Heberley', *Journal of Pacific History*, 10 (1975), 97.

³⁸ Logs of *William Hamilton*, 19 June 1839, PMB microfilms 819, 898.

a Bellonese man, who later died of his wound.³⁹ An even more dramatic story concerns a ship that anchored at Labangu, Rennell Island. The crew tried to abduct a man and a woman, but were frustrated initially by a relative of the man, who threatened them with his spear. Later, one of the intruders fired a gun and hit a Rennellese, who first realized he was wounded when he saw the contents of his stomach floating in the water. The intruders then made off with the dead man's wife and son.⁴⁰ This story may be identical to one recorded by the ethnographical collector A. S. Meek, who heard reports about 'a Rotunah man, who shot one of the Rennell Islanders because they were trying to take away his firearms'.⁴¹ Certainly, the approach of a European ship always inspired fear in the islanders after their first meetings with Europeans, and it is said that high-ranking men often forbade their families to go to the beach. Moreover, young men climbed to the tops of the coconut trees to make observations from a safe distance. Not surprisingly, several early reports state that there was no sign of human life on the islands.

The first Europeans to make peaceful contact with the islanders appear to have been missionaries of the Melanesian Mission. Between 1856 and 1863, the mission vessel *Southern Cross* called at the two islands on four occasions, having on board Bishop J. R. Selwyn, the Rev. J. C. (later Bishop) Patteson, and the Rev. Robert Codrington. Patteson was the first to compile a vocabulary of the local language.⁴² One authority claims that several young islanders were taken to New Zealand in 1856 to be indoctrinated in the teachings of Christianity;⁴³ another says it was later, in 1862.⁴⁴ At all events, when the islanders returned home, they were not strong enough to overthrow the old religion. Moreover, there was no attempt to support them from outside, as the mission's interest in Rennell and Bellona lapsed for more than 40 years after the *Southern Cross's* fourth visit in 1863. One reason for this appears to have been that the two islands were too far from the ship's regular route; another, that the murder of Bishop Patteson in 1871 removed one of those most interested in the islanders' welfare from the scene.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the blackbirding era of the Pacific had begun, and a number of islanders were recruited from Rennell and Bellona to work on plantations in Queensland. A paper published in 1976, using official figures, states that 65 Bellonese were recruited between 1863 and 1887.⁴⁶ However, this figure does not accord with Bellonese oral traditions, which claim that only a few Bellonese left for plantation work.⁴⁷ It seems probable, therefore, that some of those recruited as Bellonese actually came from Rennell or other islands. In any case, after several Bellonese and Rennellese had died in Queensland, the Queensland Regulations forbade recruiting from the two islands.⁴⁸ However, this did not stop recruiters for plantations in Fiji from doing so. For example, a licence issued in 1904 to John Anderson of the barquentine *Lady Norman* to recruit 'Polynesian

³⁹ Tuhunuku, Notebook VI, 206-8.

⁴⁰ Kuschel, *Vengeance*, text 93.

⁴¹ A. S. Meek, *A Naturalist in Cannibal Land* (London 1913), 197.

⁴² Ray, 'Mittheilungen'; W. von Bülow, 'Einige Bemerkungen zu dem Artikel "Die Sprache von Moi-ki, Bellona Insel" in dem Aufsatz von Sidney H. Ray' Mittheilungen über drei Dialekte der Salomon-Inseln', *Zeitschrift für Afrikanische und Oceanische Sprachen*, 4 (1898), 146-50.

⁴³ C. E. Fox, *Lord of the Southern Isles* (London 1958), 210.

⁴⁴ D. Hilliard, 'The battle for Rennell Island: a study in missionary politics', in G. A. Wood and P. S. O'Connor (eds), *W. P. Morrell: A Tribute* (Dunedin 1973), 106.

⁴⁵ Hilliard, 'The battle', 106.

⁴⁶ Charles A. Price and Elizabeth Baker, 'Origins of Pacific Island labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: a research note', *Journal of Pacific History*, 11 (1976), 115.

⁴⁷ Rolf Kuschel and Torben Monberg, 'History and oral tradition: a case study', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 86 (1977), 85-95.

⁴⁸ C. M. Woodford, letter of 15 Aug. 1904 to High Commissioner, Western Pacific, Western Pacific Archives, File 132/1904.

immigrants' for Fiji specifically states that Bellona and Rennell were two islands in the Solomons where he could operate.⁴⁹ The first Resident Commissioner of the Solomons, Charles M. Woodford, protested strongly against this policy, fearing serious consequences to the people of such small islands.⁵⁰ It is not known whether any islanders were actually recruited. However, around 1920, Levers Pacific Plantations on Guadalcanal did recruit some Bellonese and Rennellese for their plantations. But they abandoned the practice after several of them died and others fell seriously ill soon after their arrival on Guadalcanal. The Rennellese and Bellonese thus acquired a reputation for being useless for plantation work and this, no doubt, saved the lives of many others. Recruiting from these two southern Outliers of the Solomons was therefore fairly limited by comparison with other islands.

It was during the blackbirding era—in 1893—that the Solomon Islands became a British protectorate. Rennell and Bellona were added to it on the morning of 17 June 1897 when Captain G. N. A. Pollard of H.M.S. *Wallaroo* anchored off Bellona and landed with a small party of men.⁵¹ With 'due ceremony and honour to the occasion' and with the ship firing a royal salute, the British flag was planted and the protectorate declared.⁵² A few islanders made their appearance as Pollard went ashore. Judging from the 'few canoes hauled up on the strand' and the 'primitive fishing arrangements there in view', Pollard thought the islanders were 'of the fisher class'. They greeted him and his men in a friendly manner, 'assisting the boat through the surf' and offering spears, and bows and arrows for barter. However, they 'took to the hills in haste' when the royal salute was fired and did not reappear until after the Englishmen's departure.⁵³ Pollard's account adds:

On returning on board the boats were hoisted and secured ready to proceed when a native was observed to capsize in his canoe, and being unable to right it, he endeavoured to swim for the shore then nearly a mile distant, the ship was steered for him and he was got on board by means of ropes in a somewhat exhausted condition showing that he could never have reached the shore against the wind and current; a boat was lowered, his canoe secured and he was landed safely with a larger supply of provisions than probably he had seen for some time.⁵⁴

Resident Commissioner Woodford paid his first official visit to the two islands in 1906.⁵⁵ Then the islanders were left in peace by officialdom for 20 years. However, the Melanesian Mission vessel *Southern Cross* resumed contact with them during this period, making four visits between 1904 and 1908. Little is on record about these visits apart from the fact that one Harry Drew made a vocabulary of the language.⁵⁶ On the other hand, the interest in the islands at this time of Dr Northcote Deck of the South Sea Evangelical Mission is well documented. His mission had been founded in Queensland in 1886 and had established itself in the Solomons in 1904. In 1909-10, Deck made six voyages to Rennell, taking three Islands teachers there on the fifth voyage in August

⁴⁹ Western Pacific Archives, File 196/1904.

⁵⁰ Woodford, letter of 15 Aug. 1904.

⁵¹ The annexation of Rennell and Bellona is erroneously stated to have taken place on 19 June 1897 in a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, to the Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, of 7 July 1897 (PRO, Kew, CO 225/83, telegram 33). Brigham, *An Index*, 128, gives the date as 18 Aug. 1898. This error is repeated by Hogbin, 'A note', 174, and by K. Birket-Smith, *An Ethnological Sketch of Rennell Island* (Copenhagen 1956), 17.

⁵² G. N. A. Pollard, log of HMS *Wallaroo*, 21 Apr. 1897 to 18 Apr. 1898, PRO, Kew, Adm 53/16542.

⁵³ G. N. A. Pollard, report on the island of Bellona, 17 June 1897, PRO, Kew, Adm 1/7734B.

⁵⁴ G. N. A. Pollard, letter to Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, 5 July 1897, PRO, Kew, Adm 1/7334B.

⁵⁵ C. M. Woodford, 'Extract from an account', in N. Deck, *South from Guadalcanal* (Toronto 1945), 5.

⁵⁶ Fox, *Lord of the Southern Isles*, 210.

1910. The teachers, Thomas Sandwich, of Vanuatu, and Tommy Makira and Andrew Kanirara, of the Solomons, were killed by the Rennellese three days after Deck's departure.⁵⁷ External and internal accounts naturally differ on the reason for the killings.⁵⁸ But they instantly cooled Deck's ambitions to convert the Rennellese, and 20 more years passed before missionary interest in the islands was rekindled.

During the interval, business interests sought to exploit the economic potential of the two islands. Rumours that 'copper ore in large quantities' existed on Rennell began circulating about 1885, having originated with a certain Mr Sorensen of the ship *Douro*.⁵⁹ Several applications for mining licences were subsequently made to the Western Pacific High Commission: from W. A. Tarves in 1896, Arthur Robert Docker in 1897, Burns, Philp and Company Ltd in 1904, and A. E. Stephen in 1909. Resident Commissioner Woodford tried to prevent the licences from being granted, but apparently received little support from the High Commissioner.⁶⁰ Even so, Stephen, who is said to have visited both Rennell and Bellona in search of phosphate, was apparently the only applicant for a licence who both received one and acted upon it.⁶¹ Nevertheless, on 24 January 1910, Woodford wrote to the High Commissioner suggesting that mining should only take place in co-operation with the islanders.⁶² In 1925 and 1927, the Solomon Islands Government itself organised two expeditions to the two islands 'to see if phosphate rock existed there'.⁶³ However, the investigations showed that the percentage of phosphate was 'too low to be of commercial interest' and that the phosphatised areas were 'patchy and very localised'.⁶⁴ A movie cameraman, G. J. MacKay, was apparently a member of the 1927 expedition. An article in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* in 1936 claimed that his films had 'secured him invitations to display same before the principal geographical societies of the United States'.⁶⁵ If this were so, nothing is now known of the whereabouts of his films.

Scientific interest in the people of Rennell and Bellona may be said to have begun with the compilation of Bishop Patteson's vocabulary of their language between 1856 and 1863. In 1896, this was analysed by the linguist Sidney H. Ray, who recognised that the words were Polynesian.⁶⁶ In 1927, during a two-month stay on Rennell, the Australian anthropologist H. Ian Hogbin collected a further 500 words as well as ethnographical data.⁶⁷ In 1928 and 1930, the American Whitney South Sea Expedition conducted an investigation of the avifauna on Rennell, the beginning of prolonged research

⁵⁷ F. S. H. Young, *Pearls from the Pacific* (London 1925), 208-13; Deck, *South from*, 50-60.

⁵⁸ S. M. Lambert, 'British Solomon Islands health surveys, 1933', *Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 37 (1934), 103; Torben Monberg, 'Crisis and mass conversion on Rennell Island in 1938', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 71 (1962), 145-50; Torben Monberg, 'An island changes its religion', in G. A. Highland and others (eds), *Polynesian Culture History: Essays in Honor of Kenneth P. Emory* (Honolulu 1967), 565-89.

⁵⁹ C. M. Woodford, letter of 30 Oct. 1896, Western Pacific Archives.

⁶⁰ C. M. Woodford, letter of 24 Jan. 1910 to High Commissioner, Western Pacific, Western Pacific Archives, No. 367—MP 176/09.

⁶¹ G. A. V. Stanley, 'Report on the geological reconnaissance of Rennell Island' in *British Solomon Islands Protectorate Report for 1927* (London 1929), 15; Woodford, 'On some little-known Polynesian settlements', 45.

⁶² See note 60.

⁶³ Knibbs, *The Savage Solomons*, 199; Stanley, 'Report', 13.

⁶⁴ Stanley, 'Report', 26.

⁶⁵ G. J. MacKay, 'A movie-cameraman on Rennell', *Pacific Islands Monthly* (Jan. 1936), 44-5. MacKay says he went to Rennell in the *Ranadi* with Resident Commissioner Kane. Kane's visits were in Jan. 1925 and Aug. 1927. From an editorial note to an article by MacKay in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (Apr. 1935), 5, it appears that MacKay's visit was in 1927.

⁶⁶ See note 42.

⁶⁷ Stanley, 'Report on the geological reconnaissance', 16; Anon., 'Sydney anthropologist leaves for outlying Solomons', *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1933, 25; Hogbin, 'A note', 174-82; H. Ian Hogbin, 'Polynesian colonies in Melanesia', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 49 (1940), 199-220.

of a similar kind.⁶⁸ The last scientific expedition before World War II was the Templeton-Crocker Expedition of 1933 which included the American anthropologist Gordon MacGregor of the Bishop Museum, Honolulu, the photographer Toschio Aseida, and the American doctor S. M. Lambert. MacGregor wrote the first study of the local religion;⁶⁹ Aseida made a 35 mm film on Rennell, including part of the important harvest ritual;⁷⁰ and Lambert, who had visited the islands previously with the Whitney expedition, became an even stronger advocate for leaving the islanders to themselves. Because he was aware that these long-isolated people were not immune to new illnesses, Lambert, in both speech and writing, urged all outsiders to keep away from them. In his 'Health Survey of Rennell and Bellona Islands' published in 1931, he had written:

The people have a religion perfectly adjusted to their mental outlook. The basic morality of the island is proved by the favourable balance of population; general health is excellent. Any introduction of Christian missions would only be followed by social maladjustment and its attendant disasters. Isolation from western culture and the ways of the white man removes the most important and principal benefit of the missionary to such a society, that is, the people do not need the protection of the mission against the white man. No one knows how many ages it has taken to bring this primitive culture to its present bloom, and this can be destroyed permanently by white settlement, or the introduction of missions, or both, in a very short time. In most places, white culture has destroyed or obliterated native culture . . .⁷¹

Lambert's premonitions proved correct. Soon after his own first visit, the Rev. N. A. Ferris, a Seventh-Day Adventist, found a pretext for visiting Rennell. He had met a Rennellese man, Tegheta, in Tulagi, then the capital of the Solomons, and Tegheta had said that he wanted someone to go to his island to teach the inhabitants. Ferris interpreted this to mean that the islanders wanted to learn about the Seventh-Day Adventists. He and the Rev. L. A. Borgas left for Rennell on 29 November 1932.⁷²

A few months later, the S.D.A. Mission sought the government's permission to send three Solomon Islanders to Rennell as missionary teachers. 'The timing could not have been worse', as a student of the mission has pointed out.⁷³ Lambert was in Tulagi and J. C. Barley, Acting Resident Commissioner in the absence of F. N. Ashley, was a good friend of his and shared his views on Bellona and Rennell. According to Lambert, both Barley and H. B. Hetherington, a senior medical officer, who had also studied the islanders' health, tried to convince Borgas that attempts to convert them would be disastrous. Borgas is said to have replied: 'Even if it meant the death of the last native on Rennell, I still would feel that I must go'.⁷⁴

This was the beginning of a trial of strength between the missionaries on the one hand and Lambert and the government, represented by Barley, on the other. Barley even went to Rennell to investigate the missionaries' claims that the islanders longed to see them. According to Lambert, Barley found that they merely wanted someone

⁶⁸ Wolff, *The Natural History*; Torben Wolff, 'The fauna of Rennell and Bellona, Solomon Islands', *Royal Society of London, Philosophical Transactions: Series B*, 255 (1969), 321-43.

⁶⁹ G. MacGregor, 'The gods of Rennell Island', *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, 20 (1943), 32-7.

⁷⁰ A copy of Aseida's film is in the Bishop Museum.

⁷¹ Lambert, 'Health survey', 173.

⁷² L. A. Borgas, 'Visit to Rennell Islands', *Australasian Record* (6 Feb. 1933), 2-4; N. A. Ferris, 'More about Rennell Island', *Australasian Record* (13 Feb. 1933); A. W. Martin, pers. comm., 1975.

⁷³ D. Steley, 'The Seventh-Day Adventist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1914-42', MA thesis, University of Auckland (Auckland 1983).

⁷⁴ Lambert, 'British Solomon Islands health surveys', 121.

to teach them English so that they could communicate with traders and government officials.⁷⁵ The result was that on 27 April 1933 the government declared the Native Passes Regulation to be in force throughout the Solomon Islands.⁷⁶ This meant that islanders could not leave their districts without permission from the commissioners and they could no longer be removed from their homes to be taken to mission schools. After protests from the missionaries, the regulation was made applicable only to Bellona and Rennell from 27 November 1933.⁷⁷ Then, a decree issued in the spring of 1934 enabled the missionaries to apply to the government to remove healthy young men from those two islands as well. That same spring, representatives of the Melanesian Mission, South Sea Evangelical Mission, and Seventh-Day Adventists visited Rennell and Bellona. Between 50 and 80 young men are estimated to have been removed from them.⁷⁸ But according to Resident Commissioner Ashley, Bellona was soon closed to disciple hunters because of its inhabitants' 'suspicion of outsiders and the consequent likelihood of violence'.⁷⁹ Both islands were declared closed districts after some islanders died or were taken ill following visits by outsiders.⁸⁰

The Closed District Regulation stopped the fatal epidemics but was too late to save the old Polynesian culture. In 1938 the missionaries' removal of young people from their traditional cultural background bore fruit. During the harvest festival in October, the old religion collided with a new and primitive form of Christianity which the young men had learned at the mission schools. The struggle, named the Miupani Madness after the locality on Rennell where it occurred, has been described in detail by Moa, one of the principal participants, and analysed by Monberg.⁸¹ Two months later, Moa went to Bellona with a few other Rennellese, and in one week they convinced the Bellonese that the Christian god was stronger than their own. There was no bloodshed. Internal unrest – due to the killing of many men on the eastern side of the island a few years earlier – ensured the speedy acceptance of Christianity. A decisive battle between two rival factions, some of whom had been hiding in the forest for several years, had been expected at the time of Moa's arrival. Instead, there was promise of a peaceful future. Nevertheless, violent clashes did occur later due to rivalry between the Seventh-Day Adventists and representatives of the South Sea Evangelical Mission.

The change to the new religion as well as the consequent social changes and changes in values were gradual at first. The first resident teacher, a Melanesian, who set up house on Bellona in 1949, did little but change the patterns of the settlements. The changes became more rapid in the late 1960s as visiting ships became more numerous and young people went to Honiara and returned with new ideas, new sets of values and new patterns of behaviour. In the 1970s, there were further changes with the deaths of old men and women who had been the custodians of the traditional culture.

In summary, this inquiry has shown that contact between Rennell and Bellona and the outside world was far more extensive in the islanders' pre-Christian era than previous studies have indicated. From 1829 to 1938, the two islands are now known to have been visited by 61 ships, and there may have been others. The known figure represents

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Hilliard, 'The battle', 114.

⁷⁷ L. A. Borgas, 'Interesting developments regarding Rennell Island', *Australasian Record* (12 Nov. 1934), 3; Hilliard, 'The battle', 115-6.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 118.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ 'Closed districts in the Solomons', *Pacific Islands Monthly* (Aug. 1937), 64.

⁸¹ Elbert and Monberg, *From the Two Canoes*, text 235; Monberg, 'Crisis'; Monberg, 'An island changes its religion'.

one visit every 21 months, although the frequency of contact with each individual island was lower because many ships did not visit both of them. These visits apparently had no influence on the social or religious life of the people before 1938. In the second half of the period, Woodford and Lambert both helped to delay disruptive contact between the stone age islanders and the modern world. But they could not prevent their eventual incorporation into it.

ROLF KUSCHEL

Bankroll Instead of Bullets

Nauru's Role in the Birth of the Marshall Islands Republic

ARMED INDIGENES FROM NEW GUINEA UNDER GERMAN OFFICERS IN 1910 HELPED PUT DOWN the revolt of the Sokehs people on the island of Pohnpei when both the Melanesian and Micronesian areas were under the control of Germany. Some seven decades later, in 1980, troops from Papua New Guinea assured the viability of its neighbour, the new nation of Vanuatu, by quashing a revolt on the island of Santo. In both cases the peoples of one Pacific polity intervened by military means to directly influence the course of political self-government in another. Two years before the Vanuatu incident, in 1978 a third example of intercession by Pacific Islanders occurred, but this time less widely chronicled, possibly because not firearms but money supplied by the phosphate-rich nation of Nauru aided the nascent Republic of the Marshall Islands. The full details are revealed in a defamation case arising out of the Nauruan loan brought by the long-time President of the island, Hammer DeRoburt.¹

The events which led to the transfer of a cheque for \$A600,000 by the Nauruans to the Marshallese on 10 May, 1978, 'for the purpose of enabling the people of the Marshall Islands . . . to continue negotiations and discussions with all appropriate bodies and to continue development of institutions of self-government'² have antecedents going back many generations. For one thing, according to President DeRoburt 'there are many, there are a fair number of people on Nauru whose parentage would be . . . Marshallese'.³ Indeed, the President was married to a Marshallese woman from Ebon. Back in 1974, a Nauruan loan to the Marshall Islands Development Authority (MIDA) provided \$600,000 for the financing of a port terminal on Majuro and allied capital improvements. This loan was fully consonant with the programme on which Nauru had embarked to invest its surplus phosphate revenues in Australia and within the Pacific so as to establish an endowment upon which to depend in the near future when its mineral resources are exhausted. Nauruan money was later invested in a hotel and housing on Majuro. There thus were supporting linkages as well as precedent for the President

¹ *Hammer DeRoburt v. Gannett Company, Inc.*, Civil No. 78-0375, US District Court in Honolulu, 1978. All quotations in the text are to depositions and documents on file in this case. DeRoburt was not President of Nauru during the period when the loan was negotiated and made.

² Memorandum of Understanding, dated 10 May, 1978, supporting loan, on file as exhibit accompanying deposition of Hammer DeRoburt, 18 Feb. 1980.

³ Deposition of Hammer DeRoburt, 2 Mar. 1982, 23.