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PASSAGE, PORT AND PLANTATION

A History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration, 1870-1914

(Precis)

by

Peter Corris
Until the 1820s the only Europeans encountered by the people of the Solomon Islands were explorers whose visits were brief and intermittent. In the first half of the nineteenth century whalers, shell and bone-de-mer collectors, and missionaries entered the group. Castaways lived for varying periods on some islands, and at some places, particularly at Makira Bay, San Cristobal, Mono Island and the Polynesian outliers, the islanders became accustomed to Europeans and learned to use and value their tools and tobacco. However, these pockets of acculturation were few, and the majority of Solomon Islanders were ignorant of Europeans, and little touched by European technology, when the first colonial labour recruiters arrived in the group in 1870.

Almost without exception the first Solomon Islanders taken to Fiji and Queensland were secured by force or deception. However, the days of 'blackbirding' in the group were short. Government agents appointed by the colonial administrations acted as a check upon outright kidnapping. The islanders quickly came to an understanding of the recruiters' intentions, and their willingness to
work abroad increased as men returned from the colonies satisfied with the treatment and rewards they had received.

Several distinct phases are observable in Solomon Islands colonial labour migration. At first, recruits were drawn from the coastal communities, but, from the mid-1880s, most migrants were bushmen. Coastal populations were depleted by recruiting in the 1870s and communities became reluctant to surrender their young men. In 1884 recruiters were forbidden to give arms and ammunition as inducements to islanders, and 'returns' were forbidden to take firearms back with them. This removed an objection which the salt-water people had held to the recruiting of bushmen - with whom they were frequently at odds - and henceforth the recruiters found willing allies and assistants around the coasts of the major islands. Furthermore, the coastal dwellers learned that they could profit from the presence of the recruiters, by acting as guides, interpreters and victuallers of ships, without having to recruit themselves.

The western islands in the group quickly dropped out of the recruiters' calculations, but bushmen from
Bougainville, Ysabel, San Cristobal, Gela, Guadalcanal and Malaita entered the recruiters' boats in great numbers. Queensland came to be the most favoured colony in which to work because wages there were higher than elsewhere, and because more men returned from there than from New Caledonia and Samoa (where death rates were high), or from Fiji where the immigrant labourers were encouraged to settle.

Labour recruiting was always attended by violence. The trade goods carried by the recruiting ships were a constant temptation to the islanders. Ships were attacked in reprisal for the deaths of islanders in the colonies, and, from the mid-1890s, vessels were often fired at from the beach - a sign that too many young men were absent and that the recruiters were not welcome. Incidents of these kinds were most common around Malaita, which provided more recruits than all other islands in the group combined.

From 1890 the Solomons became the major source of Melanesian labour for Queensland and Fiji. Conditions of work in the colonies improved and wages rose as did the incidental rewards which cooperative islanders could
earn as boats' crews, 'persuaders' and interpreters.
In these favourable circumstances labour recruiting in
the Solomons for Queensland flourished until 1904 and
for Fiji until 1911.

Very few women were recruited for the great
majority of migrants were young men and unmarried.
Regulations forbade the recruiting of single women.
Overall about 25% of recruits were youths aged sixteen
or less, 25% were 'old hands' - men in the mid or late
twenties who were making second or third trips abroad -
and the remainder were mostly unmarried men in their
late 'teens and early twenties. The islanders who
volunteered were responding to four stimuli: to the
great attractiveness of European goods, to the novelty
of travel, to the example set by others who seemed to
have profited from their sojourns abroad, and to pressures
from within their own society. Labour recruiting offered
a convenient escape for young men from village life which
was frequently dangerous and usually dull. In time, a
term abroad became a sort of initiation through which it
was necessary to pass in order to be considered a
sophisticate. Some observers of the labour trade considered that chiefs and 'passage masters' in the islands were guilty of 'selling' recruits, but this was not the case. Such was the eagerness of young Solomon Islanders to recruit for work abroad that it was unnecessary for chiefs and kinsmen - who received presents from the recruiters - to do more than add their blandishments to the attractions of recruiting which were well established.

The few Solomon Islanders who went to New Caledonia and Samoa experienced harsher conditions than did migrants to Fiji and Queensland. In the latter two colonies many regulations existed for the protection of the islanders who, especially in Queensland, were prepared to press for their rights. Death rates in all colonies continued to be high and medical facilities were never satisfactory, although conditions improved steadily throughout the period. In general, islanders employed upon small cane farms in Queensland and coconut plantations in Fiji fared better than those on the large sugar estates. The number of men who re-engaged for further terms in the colonies suggests that most islanders were satisfied with the
treatment they received and this was confirmed by informants. Housing and rations were generally adequate but the working day was long and much depended upon the temperament of the overseer. Islanders associated amicably with Fijians in the villages and towns. In Queensland the Melanesians found many diversions and some - especially men who had completed their first indenture and had re-engaged at higher rates of pay - achieved high standards of comfort on the plantations and availed themselves of liquor, gambling houses and prostitutes in the back streets of the sugar towns.

In Queensland some Solomon Islanders became much acculturated through association with Europeans and other Melanesians, although Europeans tended to patronize them and there was continual tension between people from different islands, especially between Malaitans among the Solomon Islanders and Tanese among the New Hebrideans. Vigorous assaults were made on their paganism by Christian missions. The Church of England and the Methodist church made many converts in Fiji, and Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries were active among the islanders in Queensland. The most
successful proselytizer was the Queensland Kanaka Mission which enjoyed great success among the Solomon Islanders, especially the Malaitans.

European enterprise in the Solomons did not expand greatly until after the turn of the century. As a result, although from 1870 on considerable numbers of islanders were employed upon the ships and shore stations of traders in the group, local employment did not present itself as a serious alternative to colonial labour migration. After 1900, however, plantations were developed by formidable capitalists and the histories of local and colonial labour migration intersected - many of the returns and 'repatriates' from overseas engaged for work within the group.

Returns were those who came back to their islands from Queensland before 1904 and before 1910 from Fiji. People who returned after this are best called repatriates: the repatriates faced the consequences of the closing of the colonial labour trade; the returns were the products of its flourishing years. The returns brought back new goods and new attitudes; the former no less than the
latter provoked important changes in patterns of life in the islands. Firearms had far-reaching effects upon the power structure of certain areas and enabled their owners to achieve status and success which might otherwise have been denied them. Many of the returned labourers continued to associate with Europeans - as boats' crews, interpreters and traders' agents. The trade goods which such people earned, and the contents of the returns' boxes, were allotted values in the island currencies and became integral to island economies. New habits and tastes sat lightly upon most of the returns and were soon abandoned, but some men - especially those who had been Christianized - offered strong challenges to the accepted authorities and beliefs within their communities.

Federal immigration legislation of 1901 provided that no Pacific islanders were to be introduced to Australia after 1904 and that all islanders in the country were to be deported in 1906. As a result of agitation by aggrieved islanders, supported by sympathetic Europeans, the letter of this law was not insisted upon, and 1,654 Melanesians were granted exemption from it. These were people who,
by virtue of their long residence in Australia, marriages to people not of their own islands, and responsibility for children born and educated in Australia, would have faced great hardship had they been forced to return. In 1907 more than 400 Melanesians - most of them Solomon Islanders - went directly to Fiji from Queensland rather than to their homes. Most of these were men who would have faced punishments of some kind - to avoid which they had originally recruited - if they returned to their islands. The opening of these safety valves made the repatriation of approximately 4,000 Solomon Islanders between 1906 and 1908 less disruptive to life in the group than had been feared. Nevertheless, there were disturbances as hostilities between bush and coastal people were exacerbated, especially as many of the repatriates smuggled firearms back with them. Many of the repatriates joined Christian communities which were formed on San Cristobal, Guadalcanal and Malaita and Christian repatriates to Gela and Ysabel found sanctuary in Melanesian Mission 'schools'. On Malaita the repatriation of so many Christians polarized the Christian and pagan communities
and provoked tensions - often occasioned by disputes over land - which disturbed the island for many years. On the other hand, membership of Christian churches, and of the South Sea Evangelical Mission in particular, brought together islanders who had previously been enemies, and contributed to a reduction of the divisiveness which had hitherto prevailed. Within the SSEM a nativistic and contra-acculturative ideology was nourished which found expression later through the Marching Rule movement.

Non-Christian repatriates settled uneasily back into the old routines. Many had new attitudes to land ownership and property generally which put them at odds with their untravelled fellows. Survivors are few today, but they typically retain some traits - particularly habits of dress and speech - which mark them off from others in their communities.

Some repatriates participated directly in the economic development of the Solomons which coincided with the closing of colonial labour migration. A few men, who had profited by their experiences in Queensland, became planters and traders in their own right and they, like some
of those prominent in the missions, realised the value of education. As a consequence their children and grandchildren are among the élite emerging in the Solomons today.

With the economic future of the Solomons assured, C.M. Woodford, the Resident Commissioner, pressed for an end to colonial labour recruiting. His arguments that recruiting ships were the means by which firearms entered the group, and that all available labour was needed for local enterprises, eventually carried the day. In 1910 the Solomons (Labour) Regulation was issued. This provided that no Solomon Islanders were to be recruited to work outside the Protectorate for any term which extended beyond 31 December 1911. After this only a few Solomon Islanders from German-controlled Bougainville and Buka ventured abroad (to New Guinea). Labour migration to places outside the Solomon Islands was effectively at an end.
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A History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration, 1870-1914

by

Peter Corris

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Australian National University

January 1970
This thesis is based entirely on my own research whilst a Research Scholar of the Department of Pacific History in the Australian National University, between January 1967 and January 1970

Peter Corry
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Peter Corris
January 1970
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<td>ANU</td>
<td>Australian National University</td>
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<td>BSIP</td>
<td>British Solomon Islands Protectorate</td>
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<td>CO</td>
<td>Colonial Office</td>
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<td>CSRCA</td>
<td>Archives of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company</td>
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<td>FCSO</td>
<td>Records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Fiji</td>
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<td>FO</td>
<td>Foreign Office</td>
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<td>GBPP</td>
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<td>QCSO</td>
<td>Records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Queensland</td>
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<td>Queensland Kanaka Mission</td>
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<td>RNAS</td>
<td>Great Britain, Royal Navy - Australia Station. Records of the Commander-in-Chief</td>
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<td>SSEM</td>
<td>South Sea Evangelical Mission</td>
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NOTE ON THE SPELLING OF PLACE-NAMES

In general, I have followed the conventions of the Naval Intelligence Division's handbook series on the Pacific Islands.
INTRODUCTION

BETWEEN 1863 and 1914 the islands of the Western Pacific acted as a vast labour pool for European enterprise in Queensland and a number of Pacific Island colonies. In that period about 100,000 islanders - from the New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, Banks and Torres Islands, the Gilbert Islands, and New Guinea and the adjacent islands and archipelagos - went as indentured labourers to Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia. This study is concerned with the participation in this large-scale migration of Solomon Islanders - natives of the double chain of islands which stretch roughly from north-west to south-east and lie to the north of the New Hebrides and to the east of New Guinea.

About one-third of the total number of Melanesian migrants were Solomon Islanders and they have been chosen for study for a number of reasons. First, in comparison with the New Hebrides, which had been frequented by sandalwood traders for forty-five years before colonial labour recruiting began in 1863, and where European missionaries had been resident for twenty-five years previously, the Solomon Islands had had an unintensive contact history when recruiting began there in 1870. Also unlike the situation in the New Hebrides, resident traders were few and planters non-existent in the Solomons until the
the turn of the century, and there colonial labour recruiting was the main form of contact between islanders and Europeans for thirty years. These circumstances make it easier to isolate and examine the effects of the departure and return of labour migrants in the Solomons than in the New Hebrides, where avenues of contact were more diversified.

Secondly, through the 1890s and after 1900 the colonies drew more and more heavily on the Solomons for their supply of Pacific Island labourers. More than half of Queensland's recruits between 1890 and 1904 were Solomon Islanders, and, between 1894 and 1905, the Solomons supplied 81.4% of Fiji's indentured Melanesians as against the New Hebrides' 6.8%. The Solomon Islands, therefore, were the most important source of labour in the 1890s and after, when the documentary record is fullest.

Thirdly, and related to the point above, when the great majority of Pacific Islanders in Queensland were deported - between 1906 and 1908 - most of them were Solomon Islanders. This repatriation therefore had a greater impact upon the Solomons than on any other group. Furthermore, one island in the group - Malaita - always supplied more recruits than the other islands combined, and so it received thousands of repatriates who drew the attention of missionaries,

1 Im Thurn to Lyttleton, 2 November 1906, CO 225/69; Parnaby 1964:203.
traders, government officials, naval officers and newspaper correspondents. As a result there is a considerable body of documentary evidence relating to the repatriates and the repatriation upon which to draw. Finally, an important and long-enduring connection between labour migration to Queensland - and especially the manner of its culmination - and the subsequent religious, political and social history of the Solomon Islands was formed by the transformation of the Queensland Kanaka Mission into the South Sea Evangelical Mission.

Each of the major phases in the history of the Pacific Islands labour trade was played out in the Solomon Islands: the initial ignorance on the part of the islanders of the recruiters' intentions and their later ready appreciation of them, and the increasing reluctance of coastal people to migrate and the eagerness of bushmen to do so in their stead. In this group there were individual islanders who made careers and reputations from co-operating with the recruiters, and it was there, more than elsewhere, that the effects of the 'closing' of Queensland were felt.

A further point which made the Solomons an inviting place to study relates to the materials and methods used in this thesis. Since colonial labour recruiting from the Solomons reached its peak after the turn of the century it seemed likely that there
would be survivors of the business in the group. This proved to be so, and the use made of the first-hand information they provided is discussed below.

UNTIL recently, this subject had attracted the attention of three kinds of historians: the writers of popular books who regarded the labour trade in the Pacific as a sort of latter-day African slave trade;² historians of Queensland and the other colonies in whose scheme of things the Melanesian migrants were of little importance;³ and imperial historians who were concerned with the labour trade only in so far as it posed problems for, and prompted decisions in, colonial policy.⁴

Since the colonial and imperial historians have not been concerned with the conduct of labour recruiting or the internal affairs of the Pacific Island communities as such, they have been content to

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2 The best example is Dunbabin 1935, but the approach still continues, see Holthouse 1969.

3 An extreme example is provided by Lyng 1935:192, where the statement appears that, 'A narrative of the Kanakas...is in the main bare statements of numbers and of such Acts passed by various parliaments as affected their destiny.'

4 For example Ward 1948, Morell 1960.
take over the standard version of the labour trade as the atrocious business that it often appears in the accounts of missionaries who were opposed to it, and as popular writers have presented it. In a recent book on the history of the Solomon Islands by C.E. Fox, the missionaries' antipathy to the labour trade and the common method of demonstrating its iniquity are remarkably combined. Fox asserts that the 'slave trade' was 'a scourge', and lists seven instances of violence between Europeans and Solomon Islanders in support of this. He describes or mentions the killing or kidnapping of more than one hundred Gela men in the late 1860s, the kidnapping and murder perpetrated by the crew of the Carl, the killing of Bishop Patteson at Nukapu in reprisal for the misdeeds of labour recruiters, attacks by Malaitans upon the Borealis and the Savo, and attacks upon the Lavinia and H.M.S. Sandfly at Gela. Of these seven cases only three, the murder of Bishop Patteson, the case of the Carl, and the attack upon the Borealis, were in any way related to labour recruiting. Recruiters for the colonies were not yet at work in the Solomons when the one hundred or so Gela men were killed or abducted; the Savo and the Lavinia were trading vessels and in these cases, as in that of the attack upon H.M.S. Sandfly, there was no evidence that the islanders were acting

5 Fox 1967:23-5.
in response to wrongs committed by labour recruiters. The murder of the Bishop and the atrocities aboard the *Carl* took place in the first two years in which recruiting was conducted in the Solomons, and the *Borealis* attack occurred in 1880. Solomon Islanders continued to migrate to the colonies for a further thirty-one years after the last of these events, so that, in Fox's account, the business of fifty years is condemned on the basis of three incidents in the first ten.

Recent work by Pacific historians has demonstrated that the popular accounts of the activities of European recruiters and users of labour in the islands are incorrect. Shineberg's study of the sandalwood trade in the south-west Pacific between 1830 and 1865 takes account of the fact that, 'Hundreds of islanders left home to work for sandalwooder as members of cutting parties near stations on other islands.' Although she allows that kidnapping did occur, Shineberg produces abundant evidence for her conclusion that, 'on the whole the casual way in which the hiring and repatriation of labourers is mentioned in the correspondence of Towns and Co. encourages the belief that the large majority came on a business-like basis'.

practice of the Western Pacific High Commissioners between 1877 and 1914 keeps the Pacific islanders firmly in the foreground as actors in the drama of the extension of European control in the area - as sovereign people, subjects, Christian converts, and labour migrants. A detailed portrait of the labour trade emerges from Scarr's use of a great volume of archival material which had not been consulted before. The portrait takes account of the 'cajolery, the dissemination of discontent in island communities', the 'petty deceit', and the 'force' which accompanied labour recruiting at different times for as long as it was conducted. But the emphasis is clear in the author's over-all assessment of it:

As a business, however, the labour trade required the substantial consent of all concerned, which was, in a considerable measure, forthcoming from the islanders who were involved with it.  

The authors of these studies, through their thorough examination of all documentary materials available, have been led to conclusions about the motives and actions of Melanesians which are at variance with earlier accounts which were based on only a part, and often the most biased part, of the documentary record. The present study adopts a similar approach - documentary evidence is the

7 Scarr 1968b:139.
foundation of the explanations and arguments presented. However, it differs in two ways from the work of Shineberg and Scarr in that it presents, initially, a reconstruction of certain aspects of Solomon Islands culture as they may have been at the time when the first labour recruiters arrived, and it makes considerable use of oral evidence.

The dangers involved in arriving at such reconstructions of the working of a non-literate society before or soon after contact are obvious: the evidence upon which they are based varies greatly in contemporaneity and quality, and there is often a strong element of anachronism in the use of it. It is therefore unwise to use such reconstructions of the pre- or immediately post-contact order boldly and generally as fixed points of reference against which to measure change. In the present case, however, although the reconstruction is likely to be as flawed as any, the information is presented, not as a firm 'base-line', but as a tentative account of some relevant aspects of the traditional order and it is acknowledged that these aspects were already undergoing change. This reconstruction, then, should give some 'feel' for the people and places with which the study deals, and it also seems valid to suggest that this or that aspect of economic activity or leadership - which have been tentatively described - may help to explain why certain events took the course they did.

The documentary evidence which has been used
comes almost exclusively from the European 'side', and there are dangers too in this. However, no special 'knack' is required to make use of this material in describing and accounting for the behaviour of the islanders. European peasants were not literate, yet historians are confident that they can gain some understanding of them from documents which were written by their masters. So long as acknowledgment of sources is made to enable the interested or the sceptical to check upon the interpretation, the practice need not be considered un-historical.

Vansina has devised elaborate rules for checking the validity of oral traditions, which he defines as 'hearsay accounts, that is, testimonies that narrate an event which has not been witnessed and remembered by the informant himself, but which he has learnt about through hearsay'.\(^8\) Anthropologists, acutely conscious of the multiplicity of versions of traditional stories and of the many stereotypes which they commonly embody, are generally sceptical about the use of such sources for the illumination of the past. This debate, although it is of great moment to African historians and, perhaps, to historians of South-East Asia, is not of great concern to the present writer for two main reasons. First,

\(^8\) Vansina 1965:20.
most of the oral evidence used is not in the form of 'oral tradition', but consists of the recollections of observers of, and participants in, the events being described. Secondly, the oral information collected for this study, unlike that used in histories of the distant African past, can be checked for credibility against written records.

The oral evidence used in this study is of three kinds: the recollections of a number of men who went as labour migrants to Queensland, Fiji and other places; accounts given of the behaviour of recruits and returned labourers by men - often the sons and nephews of the travellers - who did not themselves migrate to the colonies; and stories and songs about recruits and 'returns'. Naturally, survivors of the Queensland and Fiji labour trades were all men who went to these colonies in the late 1890s or after. Their experiences, therefore, cannot be taken as being representative of those of migrants over the whole period.

Three dangers could exist in placing reliance upon information from these men. In the first place, septuagenarians might be expected to have forgotten much of what they felt and experienced half a century ago, secondly, they might be inclined to idealize the experiences of their youth, and, thirdly, it might be thought that they would wish to please and placate the interviewer. In relation to the first question, it was possible to check 'core'
points in the informants' testimonies by asking them the names of the vessels on which they recruited and returned, the names of ships' masters, government agents, employers in the colonies and so on. In all cases memory on these points was keen, and the old men became anxious to tell of their adventures when they realized that ships' names, places of work, rates of wages etc. were subjects about which the interviewer was informed. In the context of precise memory of the ships which they boarded, the names of the Europeans with whom they dealt and other details, there seems no reason to doubt, for example, 'Tommy' Taeova's recollection that he recruited in the company, and under the influence, of his brother, or the accounts of 'Pita' Gereeka and 'Alick' Huanuana, both Malaitans, who recalled that they entered the boats of Fiji's Clansman more or less as a youthful prank. 9

There was internal evidence that the old men were not idealizing the past. For instance, two men who had been to both Queensland and Fiji preferred the former colony and gave reasons why, and in most cases informants praised some employers, officials and facilities and criticized others. The third possible danger was minimized by the fact that most informants were Malaitans among whom there is, notoriously, no

9 See below pp. 105-6.
predilection towards mollifying Europeans. Malaitan informants, young and old, were generally critical of Europeans and 'government' past and present, and, had the ex-Queensland and Fiji labourers been kidnapped and badly treated, there is every reason to believe that they would have said so.

Many adult men in the Solomon Islands today are the children and nephews of labour migrants and have remembered something of what their antecedents told them of their experiences. Some important details are recalled; for example, it was consistently said that only small numbers of men recruited at the same time from each homestead or hamlet. Some informants were able to give the names of the few others who had accompanied their fathers and uncles. In Vansina's terms, this information has had a very short and direct 'chain of transmission', and it seems reliable. In any case it is possible to check it against documentary records and the recollections of survivors. For example, one informant's testimony that his father re-recruited for Queensland without landing from the return voyage because his intended wife had married during his absence finds confirmation, in the situation it outlines, in the case history of 'Diau' Raumaitau and in a number of documented instances.


11 See below pp. 114-5.
Story and song have been cited as evidence for a few points only: that labourers were secured by force in the Solomons when Queensland and Fiji labour vessels first entered the group and returned contented with the treatment and rewards they had received in the colonies, and that many returned labourers found it difficult to re-adjust to the round of village life.\textsuperscript{12} The first points are amply supported by documentary evidence and the excerpts from the traditional story are produced to illustrate rather than to establish them. The song cited to illustrate alienation among returned labourers confirms the many observations of this by Europeans.

One important point should be noted in relation to the collection of this sort of information in the Solomon Islands. In many areas the field worker seeking testimony about the past cannot be confident that the people he consults have not read or been told versions of their history which they may relay uncritically back to him. This was not the case in 1968 in the Solomons, where few villagers are literate and where, except in a very few places, the islanders had not previously been consulted about their history or informed about it. However, the end of this state of affairs has come. Shortly before the present writer

\textsuperscript{12} See below pp.50-1, 56, 259, 326-7.
left the group, Fox's *Story of the Solomons* was being read in pidgin English over BSIP radio. On Ysabel, the last island on which enquiries about labour migration to the colonies were made, something of Fox's views had already begun to colour the information received, and that indefensible interpretation will have a wide currency by now.

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13 Fox 1967.
SOLOMON Islanders had long and varied experience of Europeans before the first labour recruiters arrived in 1870. Three hundred years earlier, in the sixteenth century, the Spanish expedition under the command of Mendana had sailed through the group, sighting and landing on most of the large islands, and clashing with the islanders when their demands for food and water were not met and their gestures of friendship were misunderstood. The Spaniards killed many people, took others away never to return, and destroyed villages and canoes. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Spanish, French and English explorers reached the Solomons. Some simply sailed around the islands, but others landed and were usually greeted by the islanders with suspicion and hostility.

Visits by Europeans in the 250 years after first contact probably had little effect upon the lives of the people of the Solomons. Some diseases may have been introduced but there is no conclusive evidence on the point. The amounts of iron, cloth, and other European goods introduced were very small, and memory

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1 The fullest account of the routes taken by the explorers and of contact between them and the islanders is that of Jack-Hinton:1969; see also Jack-Hinton 1966:237.
of the visits - brief and intermittent as they were - seems to have died quickly. Codrington and Fox, who steeped themselves in the lore of the Solomons, could see no trace of the explorers' visits in the culture and traditions of the islands 'unless', as Fox wrote, without much conviction, 'the sea ghosts of San Cristobal, who fire at canoes, or the big sailing danoes of Santa Cruz with a deck and a house on them, called Tepuke, are memories of Mendana's ships'.

This is not to say that, without pressures from outside, the Solomon Islands was a culturally static area. Throughout this period migrations of people from one area to another - notably from Malaita to Guadalcanal and San Cristobal, and between Bougainville and the islands to the south - were taking place. Chapman's research on the weather (south) coast of Guadalcanal has demonstrated how, prior to and in the early stages of European contact, population movements were prompted by purely local forces such as natural disasters, an increase in the activities of sorcerers, or changes in the balance of power between groups. These migrations provoked changes in the customs of those areas which lost population and those which

2 Codrington 1891:10; Fox 1967:5.
gained. Nevertheless, the pace of technological, social, and psychological change among the islanders was greatly increased by the rapid growth and diversification of European activity there after about 1820.

From about that date many ships passed through the group from New South Wales en route to China with cargoes of sealskins and sandalwood. Some of these ships put in to bays and harbours in the Solomons. There must have been many meetings between islanders and Europeans, most of which would have been trading contacts where the Europeans traded cloth, metal, tobacco and matches for essential provisions. Very little is known about this phase of the contact history; suggestion has been made that the islanders sometimes attacked, and perhaps captured, China-bound ships, but definite evidence is lacking.

3 On the northern movements see Woodford 'Diary', 9 July 1886. Diaries kept by C.M. Woodford on three trips to the Solomon Islands between 1886 and 1889 are among the Woodford Papers, at present in the Department of Pacific History, Australian National University; see also Laracy:1969a. On the Malaitan migrations see Woodford 'Diary', 12 June 1886; Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 292/1896; Ivens 1930: 26-7; Allan 1957:12. For information on population movements on Guadalcanal see Chapman 1967a:13, 1967b:13-14.

4 Woodford 1906:165; Rannie 1912:183; Dunbabin 1926:10.
Early in the 1820s whaling began in the Solomons, and by the 1840s it was being energetically carried on by fleets of French, British and American ships. In season, schools of sperm whales were to be found off the coasts of Bougainville, New Georgia, San Cristobal and Malaita, and in the waters further east. The ships which pursued them through the length and breadth of the group required provisions and shelter, and probably no island in the Solomons had been unvisited by a whaling ship by the 1860s when the grounds were played out. The waters of the northern islands, around Bougainville and Buka in particular, were much frequented, despite the many occasions on which whaling boats were attacked by warriors whose arrows could pierce sheet-iron, and whose capacity to fight bravely from their canoes became notorious. 'These canoes', one whaling-master wrote, 'are much swifter than any whale boat, and they are ever on the alert to cut off such boats as are beyond gun-shot from the ship; which is easily effected when the wind is light, or in one of the calms which are so common in the vicinity of these islands.'

In general, the whalers avoided putting in to land indiscriminately. They preferred to trade

5 Cheyne 1852:67.
7 Morrell 1832:452.
for provisions with islanders who were prepared to venture out to the ships in canoes, and to make for a few well-known anchorages when landing became necessary. The two most favoured places seem to have been Mono or Treasury Island, about thirty miles south of Bougainville, and Makira Bay, an attractive deep-water anchorage on the west coast of San Cristobal. These were logical bases for work in the north and south of the group. At these places provisions were taken on, the ships were careened and other repairs carried out. The whalers' frequent visits, and sometimes lengthy stays, had marked effects upon the islanders who associated with them. The most important were those produced by the fairly large scale introduction of European goods - metal tools and weapons, cloth, tobacco and matches. The effects upon the indigenous economy of the trading of local goods - pigs, vegetables, and fish - for these exotic items are incalculable, but some re-arrangement of time and resources would have been necessary. The introduction of tobacco, which was not known in the Solomons before European contact, must have broken down the previous self-sufficiency of the islanders and made them, to a degree, dependent upon the ships' visits. The whalers certainly introduced new diseases

8 Woodford 'Ethnological Notes on Lord Howe's Group', unpublished MS, Woodford Papers, 3/34/5; Maude 1966:194.
to the Solomons, particularly venereal disease which seems to have reduced the coastal population of San Cristobal in the nineteenth century and may have had a similar effect elsewhere.

Sometimes, as happened in 1860 at both Mono and Ysabel, the islanders determined to acquire in bulk the goods they valued by attacking a visiting ship, looting it, and burning it to the water-line. At various times throughout the whaling era the people of Ontong Java, Malaita and Ysabel attacked ships for the same reason. The whalers were not slow to retaliate, doing so on one recorded occasion by means of a ship's cannon 'loaded with coopers' rivets'. But that so much whaling was carried on successfully indicates that the whalers avoided contact with the islanders as much as possible, and that the latter must generally have recognized the wisdom and profitability of keeping the peace. After about thirty years of whaling, but still a decade before labour recruiting began, the people of Makira Bay were considerably acculturated. A European who lived briefly at the Bay in 1860 commented,

The people of McKeela are not a fair sample as to the actual barbarity of the inhabitants of St. Chrystoval for the McKeela people have had much intercourse with "whalemen" & "traders". the McKeela

9 Smith 1844:196-200; Sydney Gazette, 17 September 1860; Sydney Morning Herald, 3 January 1861.
people many of them know the use of Firearms & appreciate their value...10

The whalers, as C.M. Woodford found when enquiring into the subject in the 1880s and 1890s, were the first Europeans to be encountered by the inhabitants of many of the islands.11 In at least one place, the Shortland Islands, their presence and activities had become a point of reference in native traditions. Here, Woodford discovered, certain stages of migration to the Shortlands from other islands, particularly Bougainville, were fixed in time by reference to early violent clashes with whalers in the northern waters.12 A few Solomon Islanders became acquainted with the idea of wage labour by working as crew aboard whaling ships. They acquired a smattering of English, learned the use of new tools and weapons and, although most worked for short periods in the vicinity of their own islands, a few travelled to Australia and beyond. Some of these men were met later in the islands by European visitors who found them capitalizing on their experience by acting as guides

10 Frederick J. Bradford to British Consul, 7 September 1861, Tahiti, British Consulate Papers, In-letters 1857-66, vol. 5, Mitchell Library, Sydney. Note: The writers of many of the documents quoted in this study spelled and punctuated erratically. The original spelling and punctuation have not been intentionally altered.

11 Woodford 'Ethnological Notes'.

12 Woodford 'Diary', 9 July 1886.
and interpreters. 13

When the rich trepang beds of the Solomons became known, and the exchange system involved in the New Hebrides sandalwood trade had built up a demand for pearl and tortoiseshell, bêche-de-mer and shell gatherers followed the whalers into the group. 14 The former necessarily established closer relations with more islanders than the whalers. They needed to anchor in bays and sheltered inlets where the shells and slugs were to be found. They also needed regular supplies of food and water, and information about local conditions which could only be had by communicating with the islanders and rewarding them. Their operations were slow: gathering of bêche-de-mer, in particular, was a very painstaking business which could only be done under certain tidal conditions and required semi-permanent camps on shore for the preparation of the product. Pearl and tortoiseshell collecting also required the direct participation of the local inhabitants: the most common method of operation was to persuade the islanders to collect the shell and to give hoop-iron, knives, axes, and tobacco in exchange for it. 15

13 The Empire, 6 December 1859; Sydney Morning Herald, 8 January 1861; Woodford 'Ethnological Notes'.


15 Morrell 1832:397; Cheyne 1852:63; The Empire, 6 December 1859.
The richest sources of trepang and shell were in the western islands of the Solomons - around New Georgia, Kolombangara and Simbo - and at the Polynesian outliers such as Vanikoro and Sikiana. These areas had been and were still resorts of the whalers and, by the 1840s, the concentration upon them by European enterprise had caused the inhabitants to become very knowing. Andrew Cheyne, a bêche-de-mer and tortoiseshell trader of the 1840s, found that the people of some of the western islands were quite at ease with Europeans. He found no difficulty in getting guides and helpers in such places and, on a visit to the eastern extremity of the group, he remarked on the effects of contact upon the people of Sikiana, they can nearly all speak more or less broken English, which they have picked up through their intercourse with whale ships, who often visit them to get supplies of cocoa-nuts and pigs, of which a plentiful supply can be at all times procured.  

Other Europeans besides these men of business and adventure were encountered by the Solomon Islanders in these decades. The first Christian mission to enter the group was the ill-fated Marist expedition of 1845. On 12 December of that year Bishop Epalle and his party reached Astrolabe Bay, Ysabel, where they were greeted with attitudes which fluctuated between

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16 Cheyne 1852:53.
timidity and hostility. There were signs that the islanders were acquainted with Europeans: they were eager to trade food for iron and already possessed metal axes, one of which was used to give a fatal wound to the Bishop within minutes of the party's landing on the beach. The remaining missionaries left Ysabel for the supposedly more friendly area of Makira Bay which had been their first point of call on arriving in the Solomons. Here they found, at first, tolerance and practical assistance in the person of an islander named Loukou who had worked on an English ship, could speak English, handle a tot of brandy, and proved useful as a guide and interpreter. Despite these good omens the mission was a failure. The priests and lay Brothers struggled on for some years against the hostility of the islanders who killed and ate three of their number, and malaria which ravaged them all. The mission was abandoned in 1852.17

Undaunted by the failure of the Catholics, but perhaps made cautious in the methods adopted, the Anglican Melanesian Mission extended its work into the Solomons in the early 1850s. Rather than attempt to settle a party of missionaries on an island, the Anglicans chose to infiltrate the pagan

17 Verguet 1861:82-3; Raucaz 1928:30-46; Fox 1967:27-9.
society. The tactic used was to persuade the islanders to allow young men to undergo a period of training in New Zealand or Norfolk Island in the hope that, on their return, they would be able to convert their communities from within. For more than twenty years the mission ship, Southern Cross, made regular visits to the Solomons recruiting and returning these novices while the Bishops and priests watched anxiously for signs of success. The results were disappointing: the visits of the Southern Cross were welcomed, particularly at Gela and Ysabel upon which the effort was focussed, but the missionaries were forced to admit that the islanders seemed vastly more interested in the trade goods the ship carried than in the message they bore. The cadres of native teachers failed to accomplish their task; they struggled for a time against indifference and hostility and then mostly became what the mission uncharitably described as 'backsliders'. It was not until the late 1870s, when Anglican priests began to live for extended periods in the islands and offer their personal support to the native teachers, that the church made much headway in the Solomons.  

18 Armstrong 1900:passim. 

Although, from its own point of view, the Melanesian Mission was without success in these early years, the missionaries, like the profane visitors, contributed to technological and social change by supplying European goods, particularly fish-hooks and metal tools, and by extending the mobility of people and the range of activities in which they could engage. The travelling, it seems, unsettled some of the islanders. At times older people had to restrain young men who were anxious to leave on the Southern Cross, and there were those who wanted to make the trip a second time. The cases of two men are recorded (there were probably more) who seized the opportunity to leave their islands on trading or whaling ships, their appetites for the experience having been whetted by their visit to the Melanesian Mission school.  

Explorers, whalers, traders and missionaries, there was a sameness about their visits; they did not stay long and left on the ships which brought them.

20 The emphasis in the Mission's schools was on religious instruction, but the islanders also became acquainted with new materials and methods of manufacture which they may have taken back to the islands. In New Zealand, for example, 'Out of school the great employment of the Solomon Islanders was making twine and nets from the flax, which furnished materials far superior to anything which is grown at present in their own homes.' See Melanesian Mission Report 1857-8:3-5; ibid, 1858 (pages unnumbered).
In contrast to their sojourns were those of the European residents - voluntary beachcombers, deserters and castaways. Inevitably the ships visiting the Solomons in the middle decades of the nineteenth century left people behind them, although, as Maude has pointed out, the Melanesian islands, notorious for the ferocity and cannibalism of their inhabitants, 'were scarcely propitious homes for beachcombers...and even the convicts apparently by-passed the area'. Even so, there were more beachcombers in the Solomons than Maude's survey revealed. In the late 1820s a Lascar was rescued from Malaita who claimed to be the only survivor of an English brig captured some years earlier from which twenty men (fourteen Englishmen and six Lascars) had been taken alive by the Malaitans. According to the survivor, the others had been used by the islanders as sacrifices over the years. At the same time it was learned that the Malaitans held in captivity the second mate of another English brig, the *Alfred*, which had been taken earlier. Leonard Shaw, left behind on Kilinailau in the northern Solomons by a bêche-de-mer trader in the 1830s, was obliged to make himself acceptable to the islanders for three and a half months until his ship picked him up on a return voyage. The trader Cheyne left four men ashore for a time on Simbo to

21 Maude 1964:263.
engage in trepang and tortoiseshell collecting under the protection of a friendly 'chief'. On another voyage to Simbo Cheyne found three European residents, deserters who had lived on the island long enough to acquire a knowledge of the language and to be useful to him as interpreters and advisers. Bêche-de-mer traders not uncommonly left men ashore to process the produce: another case of Europeans ashore for this reason is recorded for an island in the Ontong Java group, and here again the trader had arranged for them to come under the protection of some influential islanders. Another island to receive visitors was Guadalcanal: in 1858, seven years after the murder of the entrepreneur and visionary Benjamin Boyd at Wanderer Bay, the Austrian frigate Novara visited the west coast of Guadalcanal and found there a man named Davis, who had been put ashore from a sandalwood trader, living in apparent harmony with the islanders. 22

San Cristobal was the most important centre of beachcombing activity. In 1845 the Catholic missionaries discovered that three European sailors had lived ashore for a time near Makira Bay. Two of these beachcombers had died - of natural causes apparently -

22 Nautical Magazine I, 1832:272; Smith 1844:203-5; Morrell 1832:441-5; Cheyne, 'Account of Trading Voyages in the Western Pacific, 1841-44':455-60, MS Mitchell Library; Cheyne 1852:62; Woodford 'Ethnological Notes'; Woodford 1906:165.
and the third, tiring of the life, had left on a ship which also took away three islanders; the latter eventually went to Sydney where they worked as boatmen on the harbour. 23 Officers of the French naval vessel which came to San Cristobal in 1847 to investigate assaults upon the Marist missionaries encountered 'un Irlandais nommé Bill', who had adapted himself well to life among the islanders. 24 By 1860 a dozen or more Europeans, survivors of ships wrecked upon Indispensable reef, deserters, and inquisitive romantics had spent time on San Cristobal. One of them, Frederick Bradford, left an account of his experiences and his hosts. He found that the people of Makira Bay had a great desire for 'powder, lead, beads and tobacco'. They had come to institutionalize the presence of Europeans among them:

They also value any pure white man... they want him to go to war with them even if he does not fight, his presence appears to inspire them with a confidence they do not possess in his absence & the opposite party 'vice versa'. 25

Other aliens besides the rescued Lascar and his shipmates fell into the hands of the people of

25 Bradford to British Consul, 7 September 1861, loc. cit
Malaita. John Renton, the Scottish sailor who was thrown up on the north-east coast of the island in 1868, heard stories from the Malaitans of an earlier castaway who had pleased them for a time with his manual skills but had eventually fallen victim to their divisiveness and jealousy.  

These beachcombers and castaways played an ambiguous role as acculturation agents. For the most part they seem to have been concerned with survival - either through their own tact and adaptability or as guaranteed by an influential member of their host community - rather than with attempting to influence the manners and mores of the islanders. Nevertheless, Shaw was obliged by the people of Kilinailai to teach them the secrets of iron-working, and Renton's predecessor may have demonstrated novel wood-working and building techniques. And the throng of beachcombers on San Cristobal could not have been without effect in teaching the islanders to adapt to the new habits, weapons and tools to which they were being introduced.

European penetration of the Solomons in the fifty years before the arrival of the first labour recruiters in 1870 had been intermittent, selective and tentative. As a result in some places, such as

26 Marwick 1935: passim, especially 23. For Renton see below p. 63.
at Makira Bay, there was a blâé acceptance of Europeans. At parts of Ysabel, Gela, the western islands and Polynesian outliers the people dealt confidently with European visitors. In most places, however, especially on the heavily populated islands of Malaita and Guadalcanal, the islanders were ignorant of Europeans, and their ships and goods were at first seen as things beyond comprehension, which required explanation in supernatural terms. 27

Unfortunately the early European visitors recorded little of value about the life of the people in the Solomons as they observed it. Only Bradford and Renton among the beachcombers set down accounts of their experiences; the others survive simply as names and incidents in the writings of their employers and rescuers, who were concerned with other things. Consequently, the valuable early ethnographic information available for, say, some of the Polynesian islands is lacking for the Solomons. The explorers were not men with developed ethnographic interests and their accounts of the islanders were inevitably made through a screen of the prejudices of their times. Like them, the whalers and traders noted only bizarre and sensational aspects

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27 For evidence of this reaction on Malaita see Selwyn 1894:373, below p. 50, and, for a similar reaction on the part of the Laklai people of New Britain to the first labour recruiters they encountered, see Valentine 1958:cviii.
of the manners of the Solomon Islanders - notably their ferocity and cannibalism. Cheyne was something of an exception to this; although he could say of the people of New Georgia that 'nothing can be said in their favour', he was able to suspend his indignation sufficiently to remark on the nature of chiefly authority among them, and comment briefly on numbers, settlement patterns, and some ecological factors.28

This paucity of early ethnographic material - the early missionaries did not contribute many observations of value either - the variety of social changes produced by the period of early contact, and the great indigenous cultural diversity in the group anyway, make generalizations about the state of society in the Solomons in 1870 difficult, and anything approaching a 'reconstruction' of pre-contact culture quite impossible. What follows therefore, can pretend to be no more than an outline of important aspects of life (already undergoing change) in the Solomons as they may have been when the labour recruiters arrived. This outline places emphasis upon those aspects most relevant to the systems of labour migration which were to provoke further economic, social and political changes.

Population, size and distribution

In 1931 the population of the Solomons was around 140,000. Sixty years earlier it would certainly have been greater, but it is impossible to be precise in indicating how much so. In those sixty years a number of depopulating forces had been at work. With increased penetration of the group by Europeans, and by people of other races who had been in contact with Europeans, new diseases were introduced which took a heavy toll of lives. The use of firearms probably caused greater loss of life in the clashes between islanders than had occurred when more primitive weapons were used. An upsurge in the head-hunting activities of the people of the western islands - which seems to have developed in the 1880s and 1890s - and forty years of labour migration also worked to reduce the population.  

Evidence about these forces is unsatisfactory. European observers tended to exaggerate them all and to speculate wildly about population decline on the basis of very limited observation and experience.

29 In 1931 there were 89,568 Melanesians and 3,847 Polynesians in the British Solomons. No figures on the population of the islands under Australian mandate are available, but in 1940 the population there was 49,067, Pacific Island Geographical Handbooks, British Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, vol. III, 1944:629.

30 See below pp. 57-9.
Solomon Island informants assert that the population was greater before the arrival of Europeans. According to Allan the view that the British Solomons supported a large pre-contact population 'is corroborated by native tradition and genealogy, as well as by present day evidence in the form of vast areas of secondary growth'. These traditions and genealogies might profitably be investigated but they may be more 'nativistic' than accurate, and the mobility of the bush population would present difficulties for archaeological work. Woodford's estimate of a pre-contact population of perhaps 200,000 may not be unreasonable, although it rests on the shaky ground of random observation and the suspect method of comparing comments on the apparent size of the population in certain areas made at different points in time.

Generalizations about the distribution of the population throughout the group and on the individual islands can be made more safely. It is safe to assume that before contact, as now, Bougainville and Malaita were the most heavily populated islands. Guadalcanal was probably the most populous after these two, followed by Ysabel, San Cristobal, Choiseul and the Florida group. The evidence of nineteenth century observers, and the data compiled by ethnographers and geographers who have worked in the Solomons, make it clear that,

until the present century, the bulk of the population lived in the interior of the larger islands. In addition to these bush people there were three other groups classifiable by location and occupation. Islands like Savo, Ndai, Sikiana, Santa Catalina, Santa Ana and many others were occupied by small numbers of people whose domains were so diminutive that they were at once seafarers and garden-cultivaters. On the larger islands there were concentrations of what might be called 'intermediate' people who lived, not on the coastal fringes, but on the slopes, hill crests and valley basins within a short walk of the coast. These people, who gardened and fished, were present along the weather coast of Guadalcanal, at Sinerango, Malaita, Thousand Ships Bay, Ysabel, and at other places where conditions did not permit them to live immediately on the coast. A fourth group was the coastal dwellers, the true 'salt-water' people of the Solomons. They lived on the artificial islands in the Lau and Langalanga lagoons off the north-east and

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32 Minute on Tryon to Thurston, 3 July 1886, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General 130/1886; Clayton to Tryon, 23 October 1886, RNAS XXIII; W.T. Wawn, 'Private Logs 1888-1900', 16 September 1888, Mitchell Library; Chinnery 1924:73; Fox 1924: 7-8; Oliver 1955:5; Scheffler 1965:3; Keesing 1967a:84.

33 Keesing 1967a:84; Chapman, personal communication, 13 January 1969. People questioned at Thousand Ships Bay in 1968 affirm that this was the case there until this century.
and north-west coasts of Malaita, on the islands in the lagoons around New Georgia, in the Maringe lagoon off the east coast of Ysabel, and along stretches of the coasts of the large islands. Although most of these people cultivated gardens themselves, they obtained most of their vegetable food by trading their catches of fish for it with the bushmen. Some of the artificial island dwellers of Malaita had no garden land whatever and were totally dependent upon the mainlanders for vegetables. 34

Local organization

As a general rule in the Solomons, the further the distance from the sea the smaller was the community unit. The bush people lived in settlements, best described as 'homesteads', comprised of groups of two or three houses inhabited by a set of brothers or other closely related men and their families. 35 The coast dwellers lived in larger settlements. Brenchley on San Cristobal in 1865 found coastal

34 Ivens 1930 is a comprehensive ethnographic study of the salt-water people of the Lau lagoon. For discussion of their origins see Parsons 1966, Tedder 1968, and Chowning 1969. See also Sydney Morning Herald, 1 February 1881; Allan 1957:10.

35 Fox 1924:8; Blackwood 1935:20; Hogbin 1939:17; Scheffler 1965:3; Keesing 1967a:84.
settlements 'consisting of a dozen of tolerably large huts', and one village 'not far from the sea' of forty large huts which were arranged so as to permit 'streets' between them. The coastal folk of Guadalcanal lived in groups of huts which are better described as 'hamlets' than villages although still appreciably larger than the bush homesteads. The lagoon islands accommodated large populations within a very confined space: most of the artificial islands in the Malaita lagoons were between one and two acres in extent. Sulu Fou, in the Lau lagoon, which seems always to have been the most densely populated, had about 300 inhabitants in 1927. At that time it was estimated that the thirty or so Lau islands accommodated between five and six thousand people. There were fewer islands in the Langalanga lagoon but population densities seem to have been comparable.

According to Hogbin and Wedgwood's survey of the available evidence, the size of the Melanesian 'parish' - 'the largest local group forming a political

36 Brenchley 1873:256, 266.
38 Ivens 1930:50.
39 See 'Diary of the Reverend A. Penny, 1876-1886', 31 July 1879, Mitchell Library; Woodford 1908:81.
unit' - varied from seventy to 300 people. The lower figure is probably applicable to the aggregations of bush people in the Solomons and the higher figure to the coast dwellers. The bush parish was made up of the inhabitants of the homesteads situated within an area of a few square miles which was probably usually defined by natural features. The inhabitants of the parish spoke the same language and were linked by kinship ties. They cultivated the garden land and attended the religious shrines which lay within the parish bounds. Similarly the coastal people recognized ties between the inhabitants of adjoining hamlets so that, in parts of Guadalcanal for example, the parish consisted of a string of hamlets along a stretch of coastline. The artificial islands and natural islands in the lagoons typically fell into patterns of sets or clusters, and the inhabitants of several islands in closest proximity to each other were bound together by ties of tradition and kinship.

**Political organization**

The existence of the language-culture area, which Hogbin and Wedgwood define as incorporating 'a group of people having a similar culture but without any political cohesion', is well documented for the

40 Hogbin and Wedgwood 1953:243, 244.

41 Ibid:244.
Solomons. There was indeed no cohesion between the people who fell within the several language-culture areas into which all islands of any size were divided. The most important political relationships were between the parishes, and, particularly on Malaita, Guadalcanal, Bougainville and San Cristobal, between groups of bush and salt-water people. Confined to the decks of ships and the beaches, early European observers were unable to note anything about the relationships between the people of the interior of the islands, but they were in agreement that quite short stretches of coastline accommodated mutually hostile communities, and that a state of more or less constant tension existed between the bush and salt-water men.42

Informants in the Solomons confirm that this was the case within living memory. There are stories, for example, of conflicts between the people of Sinerango and Olumburi - harbours within ten miles of each other on the east coast of Malaita - which are both within the Kwaio language-culture area. And there is no lack of oral evidence about hostility between the men of the bush and the beach. Europeans observed this tension when they witnessed markets being conducted at which fish and vegetables

42 Bradford to British Consul, 7 September 1861, loc. cit.; Brenchley 1873:268; Marwick 1935:30. See also Fox 1924:281; Blackwood 1935:47-8.
were exchanged. One of the best accounts is that of Woodford, the first Resident Commissioner of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, who first visited the group in 1886:

The actual bartering is done by the women, who advance one towards another, the island woman with a fish, and the bush woman with yams or taro, while the men stand on guard on either side with spears or rifles.

Sometimes it is not even safe for the two parties to approach one another, and in that case a small canoe is veered ashore with a line, the articles for exchange being placed in it.43

Off-setting this segmentation of Solomon Islands society and the narrow horizons which encompassed most inhabitants - particularly the bushmen - were the links between islands forged by age-old migrations and trading systems. Migrations from Malaita to Marau Sound, Guadalcanal, and to parts of San Cristobal and Ulawa created enduring connections between the people of these areas which were expressed by frequent visits and continued inter-marriage. There were similar migrations from the Lau islands south to Walande and Port Adam on South Malaita, and even some integration of people from Manaoba and the Malaita mainland into the communities

43 Woodford 1908:81.
of the artificial islands.\textsuperscript{44} There were migrations from various islands to the Florida group, possibly from New Georgia to Savo, and the extensive movements of people south from Bougainville to the Shortlands and other islands in the strait have already been mentioned.

Systems of economic exchange were well developed in the group. As Tippett’s analysis shows, the influence of the Roviana-Simbo head-hunting and slavery complex ‘was felt 300 miles from the centre - Choiseul, Ysabel, Florida, Guadalcanal and Buin were in the regular orbit’. The Roviana and Simbo people raided far and wide for slaves, some of whom were set to work at manufacturing shell money while others were taken to serve as ceremonial sacrifices. Supplies of artifacts, food, and shell money were involved in this complex trade pattern through which the western islanders became the terror of the neighbouring islands, especially Ysabel and Choiseul.\textsuperscript{45}

In more orthodox commerce shell money manufactured by the Choiseulese was traded north to the Shortlands and Bougainville, and canoes built on Ulawa were widely distributed throughout the group.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} Melanesian Mission Report 1857-8:59-60. Woodford 'Diary', 12 June 1886; Ivens 1930:61, 85; Allan 1957:12.

\textsuperscript{45} Tippett 1967:147-51.

\textsuperscript{46} Codrington 1891:294; Brown 1910:206-7.
There were trading contacts between north Malaita and Ysabel, and considerable trade in pigs and other items between Savo, Gela and north-west Guadalcanal. The famed Malaita shell money industry, centred at Auki and in the Langalanga lagoon, required supplies of material from the hills of Malaita and from other islands. The shell money, in turn, was widely distributed, most of it going to Gela and Guadalcanal. Shell money was also fashioned on San Cristobal at Makira Bay and on Guadalcanal, although it ceased to be made on the latter island at some time soon after contact. These industries, like that of Malaita, must also have involved interchange of visits and goods between islands which countered parochialism, for the coastal people in particular.

Authority and leadership

Two different forms of leadership seem to have prevailed in the Solomons. In more places than is commonly realized, Solomon Island communities recognized the authority of individuals who can only be described as chiefs. Such individuals were present in the Lau and Langalanga lagoons, at Sa'a, Malaita, on south Malaita, on Gela, in the New Georgia lagoons, in the Shortlands, and in parts of north and south

48 Age, 17 February 1894; Woodford 1908:82-3.
Bougainville. In some of these areas the chiefs assumed their rank by hereditary right, most commonly by being the undisputed head of a traditionally distinguished and authoritative lineage. In all cases, however, they were expected to confirm their position by exhibiting prowess in the arts of organization, by ability in warfare, command of supernatural powers, and expertise in ritual. The hereditary principle seems to have operated most strongly in the Malaita lagoons, at Sa'a, on south Malaita, and on New Georgia and Bougainville. Personal ability and supernatural powers seem to have been more important in the elevation of the Gela and Shortlands chiefs. 49

Explanations for the existence of chiefs in these parts of the group can only be speculative; in all cases coastal societies are involved and it may be that these larger groups required a degree of central authority not needed by the smaller bush communities. Perhaps, too, the practice of conducting large-scale fishing drives imposed a need for direction

49 For Lau see Ivens 1930: Ch.5; for Sa'a and Gela, Codrington 1891: Ch.3; for New Georgia, Capell 1943: 27; and Bougainville, Pacific Islands Geographical Handbooks, III, 1944: 638. The standard early account of Shortlands chiefs is that of Guppy 1887a: 4, 6, 21, 23; more detailed information on the origins and extent of the authority of the famous Shortlands chief Goral, is to be found in Woodford 'Diary', 23, 25, 27 June, 9, 14 July 1886.
and so concentration of authority. It has been persuasively argued also that the prevalence of chieftainship on Malaita is a consequence of that island's exposure to an extraordinary degree of Polynesian influence. However it may be explained, the most valuable early ethnographic records - those of Codrington, Hopkins and Ivens - leave no room for doubt about the existence and authority of the chiefs.

A Florida Vunagi kept order in his place, directed the common operations and industries, represented his people with strangers, presided at sacrifices and led in war. He inflicted fines, and would order any one to be put to death. At Saa in Malanta the chief, Maelaha, is such by virtue of descent...the people work in his gardens, plant for him, build a house or a canoe for him at his word. He inflicts fines, and can order a man to be put to death.  

Among the bush people there were no chiefs. Rather, in these smaller, more scattered communities, prestige acquired by the acquisition of wealth and an indebted loyal following by the manipulation of obligations and services required by the kinship system, by ceremonial displays of generosity, and a general respect for age and experience, proved sufficient to provide decision-makers and leaders. In this arrangement no hereditary principle was involved and, as has been

51 Codrington 1891:47.
demonstrated of the Tolai in New Britain who possessed a similar system, the descendants of a leader, whose wealth was re-distributed on his death, had to rely primarily upon their own abilities if they wished to emulate him.\textsuperscript{52} The bush leaders were in fact a variety of the familiar Melanesian figure, the big-man. At the time of Sahlin's\textsuperscript{53} discussion of the type the presence of big-men had been documented for Malaita and Guadalcanal by Hogbin, and for Bougainville by Oliver; since then Keesing's accounts of Kwaio society and Scheffler's of Choiseul have provided further instances.\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{Social relations}

A variety of social structures existed in the Solomons. In some places people traced their descent through the female line. In others descent was through the male line, and in still other areas an individual's options were open - he could assume rights and obligations by stressing his maternal or paternal descent, or both.\textsuperscript{55} Whatever kind of formal

\textsuperscript{52} Epstein 1968:26-7.

\textsuperscript{53} Sahlin 1963.

\textsuperscript{54} Hogbin 1939:61-81; Oliver 1955; Scheffler 1965; Keesing 1967b:13.

\textsuperscript{55} Allan 1957:63-6 provides a useful outline of the diversity of Solomon Islands descent systems. The flexibility of some Malaitan descent systems is stressed by Hogbin and Wedgwood 1953:68.
social organization prevailed each individual was involved in a network of obligations and duties to his kin - he was both creditor and debtor. However it should not be thought that an individual's freedom of action in terms of where he chose to live, whom he chose to marry, and other personal decisions, was totally circumscribed by social rules. The rules represented ideals from which there was much divergence in fact. Recent analyses of the dynamics of two Solomon Island societies have demonstrated that the important acting and achieving groups are not always those which would seem to be dictated by the social structure. Creditor and debtor to his kin a man might have been, but there is no reason to believe that obligations were always acknowledged or that debts were always paid.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Economics and labour}

There was very little division of labour among the Solomon Islanders; men and women engaged in most of the tasks connected with fishing or gardening, and in both in areas where the people had access to land and sea. There were expert craftsmen and other semi-specialists such as priests (in all places) and, in the Shortlands, female abortionists, but no one was totally exempt from the necessity to produce food on

\textsuperscript{56} Scheffler 1965:passim; Keesing 1967b.
account of these talents.\textsuperscript{57} Shortages of food, it seems, were rare or unknown; indeed the trading systems mentioned above, and the practice of achieving social advancement by means of providing generous feasts, suggest that surpluses were more common.

Far from being on a level of bare subsistence, the gardening (for all but the most remotely located bushmen) and fishing economies seem to have been geared to surplus production and market exchange. Markets were conducted on the coasts of all major islands. The Malaita markets, especially those conducted every few days on the coast opposite the Lau and Langalanga lagoons, were surpassed in development and diversity in Melanesia only by those of the Tolai of New Britain.\textsuperscript{58} Shell money and porpoise and dog's teeth served as currency, while food, ornaments, charms and weapons changed hands. The market at Auki on the north-west coast of Malaita was perhaps the most developed. To Auki came people from other parts of Malaita and probably from Guadalcanal and Gela as well; a great deal of shell money was disposed of, and there was trade in a variety of products including a special grinding stone necessary


\textsuperscript{58} See Epstein 1968:23, 58.
for the manufacture of shell money.\textsuperscript{59}

In addition to these transactions, which involved contacts between bush and salt-water people and the inhabitants of different islands, there were internal transfers of goods and valuables. Strings of shell money (\textit{tafuli'ae}) were used in bride price payments and payments made to compensate for injuries to rights and property.

Labour requirements for fishing and for the kind of shifting agriculture practised in the Solomons were not high.\textsuperscript{60} In 1870, as now, there was probably seasonal under-employment among both coastal and bush people. By this date too, some of the coast dwellers, especially on San Cristobal and Gela, and a smaller number of bushmen would have felt the time-saving effects of the introduction of metal implements. Technology, more than any other aspect of culture, had undergone change by 1870. As early as 1832 the coastal people of Bougainville

\textsuperscript{59} Woodford 1908:82; Mahaffy 1902:194-5. At some of the market places the bushmen constructed tree platforms which served them as watch-towers, Cromar 1935:150-1. No tension between the trading parties is evident at these markets today, but apparently this was observable as recently as a decade ago, Tedder 1968:186.

\textsuperscript{60} Hogbin 1958:172; Clark and Haswell 1966:33.
had acquired an urgent need for iron, and Woodford found that the use of stone axes had been discontinued in parts of the northern Solomons around the middle of the nineteenth century. By 1889 he was of the opinion that 'Except perhaps on Bougainville, the use of stone implements has gone out among these natives...'. At Guadalcanal in the 1880s he managed to acquire some stone adzes, but they were, 'for the most part, dug up by boys upon the sites of old houses'.

It seems reasonable to argue that the introduction of superior fishing, gardening and fashioning implements in the fifty years prior to the arrival of the labour recruiters had reduced still further already low labour requirements, although some people, of course, may have chosen to employ the new tools to produce more food. It is possible that young people in particular benefitted from the time and labour-saving effect of the metal axe and fish-hook. In any case the period between puberty and marriage was not a time of great industry for Solomon Islanders. The services of young people in house building and garden clearing were occasionally required by their kin, and were sometimes 'deployed' by those who aspired to

61 Beale 1839:315; Maude 1966:194.

62 Woodford 'Diary', 25 June 1886; Woodford 1889:485.
social success, but in general - a point extremely relevant to labour migration - little was required of young people in the gardens or canoes.

Religion

The religious beliefs and observances of the Solomon Islanders were incomprehensible to early European visitors. The beachcomber Bradford, who was able to give a reliable account of temporal affairs at Makira Bay, let his imagination run free when he wrote that the islanders 'propitiate an evil deity who is, it seems, a resident of the air'. Beginning from the time when they started to live in the islands, European missionaries were the most assiduous collectors of information about the islanders' religions, and an able synthesis of this material has been made by A.R. Tippett.

The Solomon Islanders held to creation myths and a conception of a supreme power or powers, but these were irrelevant to everyday life; as Tippett puts it, 'they had "retired", as it were, from the active life of being working gods'. Instead of propitiating a supreme deity, the islanders called upon a number of ghosts, conceived of as the shades


64 Bradford to British Consul, 7 September 1861, loc. cit.

65 Tippett 1967:3.
of dead ancestors, and spirits, which had never had human form, for support in their endeavours and to turn away malefaction. Living people required for their physical, economic, and social well-being a supply of mana of which the classical definition is Codrington's.

It is a power or influence, not physical, and in a way supernatural; but it shews itself in physical force, or in any kind of power or excellence which a man possesses. This Mana is not fixed in anything, and can be conveyed in almost anything; but spirits, whether disembodied souls or supernatural beings, have it and can impart it; and it essentially belongs to personal beings to originate it, though it may act through the medium of water, or a stone or, a bone. All Melanesian religion consists, in fact, in getting this Mana for one's self, or in getting it used for one's benefit - all religion, that is, as far as religious practices go, prayers and sacrifices.66

Because ghosts were repositories of mana, burial sites of ancestors assumed importance; they became shrines and places where the mana-summoning ceremonies might profitably be conducted. Furthermore, the spirits, to which supplication was made in similar ways, were sometimes considered to inhabit certain localities - groves, and stretches of beach for example. More often, however, they were associated with living

66 Codrington 1891:119; see also Hogbin 1936.
creatures, such as snakes or sharks, and natural features like rocks and clouds. Because of these associations the islanders' religious acts and beliefs were intimately connected with their animate and inanimate surroundings.

The manipulators of the mana were priests and sorcerers. The former were those who were particularly adept at devising the right spells for the summoning up and directing of the mana in the favour of gardening and fishing. The powers of the latter lay in their supposed ability to devise spells and charms which would bring ill-fortune to individuals and groups and their undertakings.

The preservation and direction of mana involved the islanders in a variety of religious acts and rituals. They collected and deposited in special places the skulls of ancestors and defeated enemies; they offered sacrifices, sometimes human, in demonstration of the intensity with which the power of the ghosts and spirits was desired, and the seriousness with which their sites and manifestations were regarded. A great range of beneficent and malevolent spells, incantations and charms all played a part. 67

Essentially the religion seems to have been very pragmatic. Things were expected, even demanded

67 Tippett 1967:3-16.
of the spiritual forces which were thought to exist, and the propitiating and honouring involved was not directed in any way to any personification of them, but rather was wholly concerned with practical results. There are two further points, for the present purpose, to be made about the implications of this religious framework for the lives of the people of the Solomons. The first is that many of its aspects, particularly the sorcery and the use of sacrifices, contributed to the divisiveness and uncertainty of life. Secondly, unlike many other religious systems, initiations and noviciates do not seem to have been involved. Indeed, apart from the puberty rites in Bougainville, the initiation of young people of the chiefly line at Sa'a, Malaita, and the mild initiations involved in entering the Ysabel and Gela secret societies, the stages of a man's life were not marked by important ceremonies. 68 There was, therefore, no social distinction between initiated and uninitiated, and no impediment - on these grounds at least - to the recruiting of any young Solomon Islander.

68 Codrington 1891:70, 97-8, 233-4; Blackwood 1935:24, and Ch.6.
II

RECRUITING FOR THE COLONIES, 1870-1911

IN 1870 labour recruiters moved into the Solomon Islands from the New Hebrides, where the islanders had been introduced to the role of employee in the 1850s by sandalwood traders who had employed hundreds of men frequently on islands other than their own.¹ Recruiting for Queensland and Fiji had begun in the New Hebrides in the early 1860s and, between 1863 and 1868, 1,347 New Hebrideans engaged for three year terms in Queensland. Between 1864 and 1869 1,649 Melanesians - most of whom were from the New Hebrides - were recruited for Fiji.² By the end of the 1860s colonial and inter-island labour migration had gone on in this group to such an extent that the people there had become sophisticated and were apt to drive hard bargains with the recruiters. Most of

1 Shineberg 1967:190-8.

2 For this and subsequent references to Queensland statistics, see Appendix I, also Parnaby 1964:203. The figures for Fiji are based on an analysis of the almost complete record of Melanesian labour migration to the colony, 'Fiji, Labour Department, General Register of Polynesian Labourers Introduced to Fiji, 1870-1911.' In Fiji the Melanesians were usually called 'Polynesians', and in Queensland 'Kanakas'.

the recruits came from Tana and Malekula, and by this time these people in particular clearly understood that the wages paid in Queensland were double those in Fiji. Recruiters for the latter colony, although they could still obtain respectable numbers, found that their voyages were becoming longer and more expensive. In the hope of escaping these difficulties, the Fiji recruiters pushed north to the Solomons in 1870: the brig *Kestrel*, which returned to Levuka on 22 November 1870 with 162 Solomon Islanders aboard was the first ship from Fiji to work in the group.  

The *Kestrel* was followed by a number of other ships in quick succession: the *Mary Ann Cristina* arrived at Levuka with recruits from the Solomons soon after, and in December the *Fiji Times* reported that the success of the first vessels had attracted the *Coquette, Active, Colleen Brawn*, and *Margaret Chessell* to the Solomons. Queensland ships entered the Solomons, which had for them the advantage of being a closer recruiting ground than the New Hebrides, in the same year. The *Woodlark* docked in Brisbane on

3 See Codrington to Normanby, 16 March 1872, Governor's Office, Official Letters addressed to the Governor, 1872-1907, QSA, GOV A5.

4 *Fiji Times*, 26 November 1870.

5 Ibid, 17, 21 December 1870.
19 January 1871 with forty-three Solomon Island recruits aboard, and she made a second voyage to the group later in the same year. Another Queensland ship, the Isabella, worked in the Solomons in 1871, and by the end of that year there were some hundreds of Solomon Islanders under indenture in the two colonies. In 1871 it was noticed that in the hotels of Levuka 'the subject of conversation is frequently the merits of "Line", or "Solomon Islands" or "New Hebrides" labor'.

As they had anticipated, the recruiters did not find the canniness among the Solomon Islanders that characterized the New Hebrideans by the 1870s. Only at places which had been much frequented by whalers and traders was there even a limited understanding of the meaning of wage labour. Those ships which secured recruits from San Cristobal and Gela at this time were following the line of least resistance established by earlier trading and missionary contact, but, to get their complements, many of the early recruiters resorted to deceit and violence.

The signs that they had done so began to appear in Fiji. Employers of indentured labourers

6 'Register of the arrival of vessels bringing Pacific Islanders to various ports. 2 June 1868-23 Dec. 1881', QSA, IPI 3/1.

7 Fiji Times, 9 September 1871.
soon found that most of their Solomon Island hands had come to the colony with no idea of what was expected of them. They did not understand that they were engaged for three or five years and, when they learned this, many showed an extreme reluctance to acquiesce. Recruits who had arrived in the Mary Ann Cristina ran off into the bush soon after their arrival on the Taveuni plantation to which they had been allotted. Soon after this, recruits from the Kestrel, employed upon a plantation in the Rewa district, absconded in a stolen boat, and other Solomon Islanders who had come to the colony in the Lismore did the same. Left short-handed, and inconvenienced by the disturbances the escapees caused, employers changed their minds about the new source of labour. Wrote one employer 'This species of labour, is, I think, not so desirable as is generally supposed. They now say that they are engaged for five moons only and not for five years. These moon-struck people threaten all sorts of mischief, in case they are not sent back in five months.'

One of the difficulties faced by the first recruiters in the Solomons was that of making the terms of engagement plain to people with whom they

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8 Ibid, 26 November, 21 December 1870, 11 February, 24 June, 4, 8 November, 20 December 1871.
could not easily communicate. Except at Makira Bay, the Polynesian outliers, Gela, and, perhaps, at Mono, Europeans could only have communicated with the islanders through signs. The first recruiters do not seem to have taken interpreters from these places to aid them on other islands, and, even if they had done so, such interpreters would have been of little use in the face of the multiplicity of languages spoken in the group. Like those who worked in the New Hebrides in the previous decade and around New Guinea in the early 1880s, the pioneers of recruiting in the Solomons did not take pains to enlighten islanders who seemed willing to leave their homes for three or five 'moons'. Furthermore, the rebellious behaviour of the first batches of Solomon Island recruits demonstrated that they had more to resent than having been deceived about the length of their absence. Evidence came to light that the crew of the Ellen, a ship recruiting for Fiji, had fired on the canoes of Malaitans who had come out to trade. They had hauled one young man and his father aboard and then thrown the latter into the sea. Another Fiji vessel, the Nukulau, acquired a reputation as a 'well-known slaver', and the much publicized case of the Carl showed the lengths to which opportunist and unsupervised recruiters could go when the rewards were high and the islanders unsuspecting.

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The crew of the Carl kidnapped wholesale in the Solomons from Bougainville to Malaita and, when the islanders created a disturbance in the hold, shot and killed many of them. Members of the ship's crew brought their victims on deck and threw about seventy of the dead and wounded overboard. Enquiry into this affair, and the trial for murder of some of the Europeans involved, revealed how the Melanesians had been abducted. The method most frequently used was for the crew to attract islanders alongside in their canoes and then to hole or upset the canoes by dropping pig-iron or heavy harpoons into them. They were then hauled aboard and imprisoned below decks; those who put up a spirited
resistance in the water were shot. 10

At places where the islanders had been made trusting by earlier contact with Europeans, such as Santa Ana which had been a watering place for whalers, the 'blackbirders' were able to coax them aboard

10 See 'Further Correspondence respecting the Deportation of South Sea Islanders', GBPP, XLVIII, 1871;
'Further Correspondence respecting the Deportation of South Sea Islanders', GBPP, XLIII, 1872;
'Communications respecting Outrages committed upon Natives of the South Sea Islands', GBPP, L, 1873;
'Correspondence respecting Outrages committed upon Natives of the South Sea Islands', GBPP, XLV, 1874.
For accounts of the activities of the Ellen and the Carl, see Fiji Times, 10 April 1878. On the Nukulau, see March to F.O., 7 September 1871, FO 58/129, and March to Sunderland, 27 September 1872 published in the Argus, 30 November 1872. An account of the Carl's kidnapping was taken down in Fijian from two Malaitans who survived the massacre. These men, with forty-eight other Solomon Islanders and five Tanese, were transferred in Fiji to the schooner Peri to be taken to the plantations to which they had been allotted. The Melanesians rose against the European and Fijian crew, killed them, and attempted to sail the ship north. However, they drifted to the coast of Queensland and, by the time the vessel was located, twenty islanders had been killed and eaten by the others. The survivors were then shipped back to Fiji where the two Malaitans in question escaped and lived for many years in a Fijian village. The authenticity of the details of their statement, which was made to C.R. Swayne, Stipendiary Magistrate at Loma loma, was attested to by W.G. Ivens, who was told by Malaitans about the Carl and the men she abducted. A translation of the kidnapped men's statement is in Brewster 1927:231-4, see also 214, 218.
by offers of food or trade goods and, when the unsuspecting islanders had ventured below decks, the hatches were closed and the crew hoisted sail. Those whose only concern was a full ship were also prepared to go ashore in strength and round up as many people as they could catch. Not surprisingly, no documentary evidence of this form of 'blackbirding' exists, but it is well illustrated by a story told on Malaita of the first 'recruiting' for Queensland in the Kwaio district:


holim tufela finis. Nau holim tufela finis, nau holim tufela nau olgeta, an tai'im up legs, tai'im tufela hans, an putim long dingi an was bak witim long sip.

Taim olgeta putim long sip, olgeta putim insaid daun bilo long sip nau. Den olgeta satim daun bilo nau, den olgeta himi go nau, olgeta go nau.

Similar stories are told independently at many of the important recruiting places in the Solomons - the Malaita lagoons, Malu'u, Suaba Bay and Olumburi, Malaita, on San Cristobal, and the west and weather coasts of Guadalcanal, for example - which indicate that the first people to go to Fiji and Queensland from these places were abducted in this or a like manner.

The Solomon Islanders struck back at the 'blackbirding' ships in these early years. The penalty of violating the earlier established good relations with the people of the west coast of San Cristobal - on which Makira Bay is situated - was suffered by the captain and three crew members of the *Cambria*, which was kidnapping in the Solomons in 1871. At various points along the coast 'the natives did all they could' to capture the ship's boats, and eventually they managed to spear the four men when they were trading for provisions. The remnant of the crew took the precaution of sealing their captives below decks as the ship worked around the islands, but this failed
to prevent eight men from escaping at Guadalcanal.\textsuperscript{11} The inhabitants of places which had been visited by the kidnappers took revenge upon the next ship to come along: thus the killing of Bishop Patteson in 1871 was shown to be an act of reprisal for kidnapping done by a Fiji ship, and the Queensland vessel Lady Darling was attacked at Malaita in 1875 for similar reasons.\textsuperscript{12}

'BLACKBIRDING' came to swift end in the Solomons as a result of two developments. These were, the installation upon all recruiting ships of a government agent, and the increased awareness displayed by the islanders of the recruiters' intentions, and of what labour migration involved. Under pressure from the British government the Queensland administration issued regulations in December 1870 which provided for the appointment of government agents. All prospective employers of Pacific Islanders were obliged to deposit with the Immigration Department ten shillings for each labourer required and £10 per head as return passage money. From the fund thus built up the government agents were salaried at £10 per month, and the owners of the recruiting ships were obliged to provide them with board and a free passage. In 1874 the government of

\textsuperscript{11} March to Granville, 28 November 1871, FO 58/130.

\textsuperscript{12} Scarr 1967a:5-6; \textit{Mackay Mercury}, 11 December 1875.
Fiji modelled its regulations on those of Queensland, and provided for government agents in a similar way.

Although the intentions of the colonial governments were good, the effectiveness of the government agents was reduced, in the first place, by the number and variety of the duties which were allotted them. They were charged with supervising the act of recruiting so as to ensure that each man engaged of his own free will and was fit for plantation work. It was their duty to see that food and clothing were issued to the recruits according to regulations, and that islanders being returned were landed at the precise places from which they had come. Each of these duties involved paper work which was added to by the task of keeping a detailed log of the voyage. To the government agents aboard Fiji's ships fell the duty of treating the recruits and 'returns' for ailments they might suffer in the course of the voyage; many government agents, on the ships of both colonies, found these multitudinous tasks beyond them.

Most of the government agents appointed in the 1870s were a poor lot and they were placed in a difficult position as regards the realities of life on board ship. As Parnaby points out, and Scarr documents in detail, the government agents had great difficulty in retaining a measure of independence against the accepted authority of the ships' captains. Although they had it in their power to order the master
to cease recruiting if they felt that the regulations were being infringed, most government agents were reluctant to do so. The low salary and manner of appointment of government agents did not make it likely that the posts would be filled by capable and independent-minded men. Appointments to the job in Queensland were made by the Colonial Secretary on the recommendation of some local person. As a result, many government agents were the nominees - if not the creatures - of parties with a financial interest in the recruiting. 13 There was also a considerable turnover in government agents because the job was not a permanent one and men who displayed ability in it frequently entered other departments for, as Fiji's Agent General of Immigration wrote, 'the lowest permanent Government appointment holds out greater advantages than the post of Government Agent'. 14

In 1874 the Queensland government began to take hesitant steps towards ensuring the appointment of more suitable men as government agents. Although over the next ten years it was sometimes demonstrated that these officers were drunken, insane or otherwise incompetent - or were the creatures of the captains and


14 Anson to Colonial Secretary, 25 January 1882, FCSO, 316/1882.
employers - they did act as a check upon outright kidnapping.  

It was the growth in the awareness of the islanders themselves which made kidnapping at once unnecessary and impossible. Regulations in force in Queensland and Fiji provided that islanders were to be returned on the expiry of their indenture if they chose not to re-engage for a further term in the colony. Through the 1870s many of the people taken initially by force or deceit - including, even, some of the survivors of the Carl massacre - were returned. The attractiveness of labour migration was established by the return of men who, despite the way in which they had been abducted, were satisfied with the treatment and rewards they had received in the colonies. In many parts of the Solomons stories are told of the return of the first 'recruits' which stress the happy outcome of their

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15 An interesting sidelight on the alleged foibles of government agents is cast by some lines of the song 'Recruiting' which was, apparently, current on the labour ships in the 1880s:

Far, far upon the sea, and the agent's on the spree.
The Captain don't know what is to be done.
For unless he has his glass he won't let the niggers pass
And back without a cargo we must run.

The "Native Companion" Songster (Brisbane, 1889):3.

16 GBPP, XLV, 1874:64.
adventures. The Kwaio story cited before continues with an account of the return of the kidnapped men and their version of their experiences.

Nau Tobebe an Afio, tufela tok nau stori about Queensland. 'Samting yufela yumi fraitim ol taim ia. Himi sei devil - himi no devil ia, himi tambawan samting, nambawan pipal. Olgeta savi giv you kaikai, gudkaikai. Olgeta savi givim yu gud beds, gud haus. Evri samting gudfela olgeta.... Nau disfela pleis long Queensland ia, himi gudfela tumach. Himi, spos himi kam long ia, himi gudfela for yumi nau, olgeta yang boi, for yumi go long him, for yumi kasim plenti kain samting.'

News of the return of men from Queensland or Fiji would have been broadcast quickly and widely, making it unnecessary for communities to have direct experience of this sort for their members to be infected with the desire to emulate Afio and Tobebe.

DURING the 1870s and 1880s, the colonial recruiters extended their activities to cover the whole group. As early as 1872, in fact, men had been taken from every major island in the Solomons except Choiseul and New Georgia. 17 By the mid-1880s even the smallest islands had been visited and tested. By this time the relative merits of the various islands and

17 'Register of the arrival of vessels...'; 'Fiji, General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'; Fiji Times, 26 November 1870.
anchorages were known, and the recruiters had learned which were the best places to make for.

They soon found that the western islands in the group were poor recruiting grounds. The slave raiding and head-hunting operations conducted by the people of New Georgia, Vella Lavella, Kolombangara and Simbo were one of the important causes of this. In the 1880s and 1890s, the period for which most documentary evidence is available, the western people intensified their head-hunting. On a visit to the Solomons in 1886, Woodford learned that thirty-one heads had been taken in a fortnight by parties of warriors from the Roviana lagoon, New Georgia. Two years later he was told that head-hunting was going on 'worse than ever.' An expedition of head-hunters from two Roviana villages to the west coast of Choiseul had returned with many heads, and, soon after, a party of raiders from Vella Lavella killed all thirty-five inhabitants of a village on the east coast of Ysabel. The raids continued on a large scale for the next decade. In August 1898 it was reported that head-hunting was being carried on 'more vigorously than ever before', and that 165 heads had been taken in the previous twelve months.  

18 Woodford 'Diary', 6–8 October 1886, 21, 28 August 1888; Woodford to Berkeley, 30 April 1897, CO 225/52.

19 Woodford to High Commissioner, 27 August 1898, CO 225/57.
and the effects of contact with Europeans and the scale upon which raiding could be carried on are indicated by the size and nature of the expeditions mounted by Iqava of the Roviana lagoon, who is said to have 'used two English-built boats, hunted with 500 men, between 300 and 400 of whom had rifles, and 9,000 rounds of ammunition'.

Head-hunting and slave raiding were the foundations of the vigorous military, economic and ceremonial life enjoyed by the people of the western islands who were, consequently, less likely to be attracted by the novelty of travel to Queensland or Fiji than were people who were subject to more mundane routines. Furthermore, recruiters were unlikely to be successful in areas afflicted by head-hunting because the populations there were much reduced by it. Choiseul, in particular, suffered a heavy loss of population, and Ysabel, although it did yield considerable numbers of recruits, was reduced in population and value as a recruiting ground by the depredations from the west. Always subject to these attacks, the Ysabel people, until the 1880s, built high lookouts in trees along the coast and, if forewarned, they could evade or resist the head-hunters. However the use of firearms by larger and more frequent

20 Tippett 1967:152.
raiding parties made resistance impossible, forcing the Ysabel people to retreat to the interior of the island and become chary of visiting the coast. 21

The comparatively early occupation of the western islands by European traders also made the area an unprofitable field for colonial labour recruiters. Semi-permanent bases were established by copra and ivory nut traders in the Roviana lagoon and on Kolombangara, and the western islands were much visited by traders such as Ferguson of the Ripple and MacDonald based at Fauro in the Shortlands. Similarly, Savo and Ugi were settled on by traders in the 1870s, and, like the western islanders, their inhabitants, given other opportunities to acquire European goods, soon showed a disinclination to work abroad. 22 The islanders in these places could obtain employment on the trading ships or receive trade goods in exchange for their copra and ivory nuts without

21 Journal of H.A. Mair, Flirt, 13 October 1880, Fiji, Immigration Department, Government Agents' journals. With one exception, which is indicated in the footnote, all government agents' journals subsequently cited are in this series. Coote 1883:141; Age, 3 March 1894; Woodford to High Commissioner, 26 February 1906, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 227/1905.

22 Ferguson to Wilson, 1 August 1880, RNAS, XV; Woodford 'Diary', 11 May, 25 August, 25, 28 September, 8 October 1886; Fox 1967:92.
having to run the considerable risks involved in recruiting for work in the colonies. The almost complete records of Melanesian labour migration to Fiji show that from Choiseul, Savo, New Georgia, Vella Lavella and Ugi - where there were head-hunters or traders or both - only fifty-two recruits were secured.\(^{23}\) Until about 1880 Queensland's ships recruited successfully at Savo,\(^{24}\) but ceased to do so after European trading operations got seriously underway. Similarly, some people left Ugi and Simbo for Queensland in the first decade of recruiting but not thereafter, and there is no documentary or oral record of recruits having gone to Queensland from New Georgia.

By the mid-1880s most of the recruits for Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia and Samoa came from Malaita and Guadalcanal. San Cristobal, which had enjoyed an early popularity as the most familiar island and the one at which the people could be most readily communicated with, continued to provide recruits in fair numbers for Queensland until 1903 and for Fiji until 1908. The Florida group was often visited, sometimes with considerable success, although because of the headway made by the Melanesian Mission

\(^{23}\) 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'; Somerville 1897:411.

\(^{24}\) See Woodford 'Diary', 26 March 1887.
recruiting here posed special problems for the recruiters. Buka and Bougainville people went in fairly large numbers, especially to Fiji, until the northern islands came under German control in 1886. The islands mentioned all had the initial advantage for the recruiters of having considerable coastal populations, and it was almost exclusively from among these people.

25 See below pp. 120-1.
that the recruits came in the first decade.  

The coastal people of San Cristobal, and to a lesser extent of Buka and Bougainville, had been contacted by whalers and others before 1870, and a few of them had travelled far afield. The potentialities of Guadalcanal as a recruiting ground were established

Recruiting was never carried on in a sustained and serious way in the Polynesian-inhabited islands of the Solomons. A few people were taken to Queensland from Rennell, Bellona and Ontong Java in the 1870s and 1880s, but they, like the Santa Cruzians, were found unsuitable in temperament and physique for plantation work. Employers in Fiji had a similar experience of Solomons Polynesians: seventeen of the thirty-nine taken there from Ontong Java died before completing their term, as did all four recruits from Bellona. In Queensland in 1888 there was a very high mortality among the few Santa Cruzians in the colony, and government agents were instructed to pass only people 'of the highest standard' from these islands. Very few people left from the Polynesian outliers in the following years and, in 1900, Woodford reacted indignantly to the recruiting, by a New Caledonian ship, of some Santa Cruzians for work in the sulphur mines; steps were taken to recover these men. In 1904 Fiji's Agent General of Immigration stated that no Solomons Polynesians had been brought there 'for at least twenty years'. On these points see 'List of Pacific Island Labourers, December 1865-January 1904', QSA, PRE 83A-B; 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'; Chief Secretary to Norman, 12 March 1894, enclosed in Norma to C.O., 21 March 1894, CO 234/59; Woodford to High Commissioner, 1 November 1900 CO 225/60; Woodford to High Commissioner, 15 August 1904, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 136/1904; Coates to Colonia Secretary, 18 October 1904, enclosed in im Thurn to C.O., 29 October 1904, CO 225/67; Ivens 1918:218.
by the recruiters themselves, by trial and error as they penetrated the group, whilst the possibilities of Malaita were demonstrated by accident. In 1868 John Renton, a Scottish sailor, deserted the American guano ship aboard which he had been shanghaied in San Francisco. With four companions Renton drifted 1,200 miles in an open boat to the north-east coast of Malaita. His companions died of exposure and exhaustion or were killed soon after reaching the island, but he survived and came under the protection of an influential man of Sulu Fou. Renton lived for eight years in the Lau lagoon, learning the Lau language and adapting himself to life on the artificial islands. In August 1875 he was rescued from Sulu Fou by the Queensland recruiting brigantine Bobtail Nag, whose captain and government agent had determined to investigate rumours that a European was being held prisoner on Malaita. On the occasion of Renton's rescue the Bobtail Nag secured twenty men from the islands in the lagoon. A few months later Renton accompanied her back to the area as a guide and interpreter and thirty-one recruits were engaged from the artificial islands.27 Previous to this, in 1871, the Isabella had recruited six men from some part of Malaita, and the Ellen and the Carl had kidnapped down the west coast of the island, but Renton, by providing the recruiters with an entrée to the Lau

27 Marwick 1935: passim.
lagoon, enabled them to tap what was probably the largest single source of labour in the group. The Bobtail Nag's success attracted other ships to the artificial islands of Malaita from which a great number of recruits were secured through the 1870s and 1880s.

This concentration upon the lagoons in the years after 1875 paid dividends in the long term also, for the thorough acquaintance with recruiting gained by these salt-water people made them valuable allies in later years when the recruiters' energies were devoted to attracting people from the adjacent mainland. But this was not yet; nine journals kept by government agents of ships recruiting in the Solomons for Fiji between 1876 and 1880 survive\textsuperscript{28} and these, though a limited sample, tally with other evidence that the Fiji recruiters in these years were dealing almost exclusively with coastal people. Only one Queensland government agent's journal for the period survives, that kept by John Renton in 1878-9, but here again entries which mention the recruiting of people from their canoes and in which the return of men 'at their native villages' is witnessed from the ship, indicate that coastal people were involved.\textsuperscript{29}

This second phase in the history of the

\textsuperscript{28} See Scarr 1967b:343-4.

\textsuperscript{29} Marwick 1935:69-70.
labour trade, when the great majority of the recruits were coast dwellers, lasted until the mid-1880s and came to an end earlier on some islands than others. Although kidnapping ceased the labour trade was still not free of violence: there were a number of casualties among the ships which worked their way through the group recruiting and returning. The violence which occurred in this period was similar to that in which the whalers and traders had earlier been involved. Sometimes, tempted by the seemingly inexhaustible stores of trade goods on display, the islanders attacked the ships with the intention of looting them. In 1880 there were three such attacks. The Queensland schooner Emprenza was taken at Kolombangara in June; all members of the crew were killed and the ship was looted and burnt. In September the Borealis, a brigantine in the Queensland trade, was attacked near Uru on the west coast of Malaita. In October the Fiji schooner Zephyr was assailed at Choiseul. Each of these attacks appeared to be motivated by a desire for plunder and this probably also inspired the strike against the Janet Stewart at Kwai, Malaita, in February 1882. The islanders planned and executed the assaults upon the Borealis and Janet Stewart with great skill, sending parties of men out to the ships, ostensibly to offer themselves as recruits; once aboard they took out concealed weapons and cut down the crew and recruits who had joined the ship at other places. Five Europeans were
killed aboard the Borealis, six aboard the Janet Stewart including the government agent, and Malaita quickly acquired a reputation, which stayed with it for the next sixty years, as the most dangerous island in the Solomons. Recruiters working the east coast of Malaita in the years that followed these affrays were likely to be as much apprehensive as pleased when large groups of able-bodied men volunteered. On some ships cannon were kept primed and loaded, and a strict 'anchor watch' was maintained at night. One government agent recalled that on some ships working Malaita sacks filled with broken glass were kept lashed to the mast ready to be scattered over the deck if the islanders looked threatening.

30 For the Emprenza see Woodford 'Diary', 25 September 1887; Wawn 1893:211; Stevens 1950:382; for the Zephyr Wawn 1893:211-2; Stevens 1950:402; for the Janet Stewart file in QCSO, 2853/1882, Sub Agent General of Immigration to Colonial Secretary, 22 July 1882, FCSO, 1925/1882, and Bevan to Brooke, 6 May 1886, RNAS, XXIII; for the Borealis journal of H.A. Mair, Flirt, 14-16 September 1880; 'Papers relating to murder of a part of the crew of the "Borealis" at Malayta', in CO 225/7; Woodford 'Diary', 26 May 1886; Fiji Times, 29 October 1880, 13 October 1896.

31 Gaggin 1900:179-80. This trick was also mentioned by a newspaper correspondent in a series of articles on the Solomons which the writer claimed were based on personal experience, see Age, 24 February 1894. Similarities between the articles and parts of Gaggin's book suggest that he may have written them, but this cannot be positively proved.
The coastal people of the Solomons gradually opted out of direct participation in the labour trade in the 1880s. First the recruiters for Fiji and then the Queenslanders, found it increasingly difficult to attract people from the coastal settlements and, by the end of the decade, most of the recruits for both colonies were bushmen. Scarr documents and discusses this shift and, as he suggests, the most important cause of it was the salt-water men's discovery that they could profit from the presence of the recruiters without having to take ship for the colonies themselves.32 Signs that they realized they could exploit the recruiters began to appear as early as 1881. In that year Fiji's Jessie Kelly experienced difficulties in getting recruits from the Malaita beaches. Eventually some volunteers were forthcoming at Su'u Bay on the central west coast, trade goods changed hands, but the 'recruits' attempted to escape from the ship at night. This trick had, apparently, become a common one and was played on Queensland's recruiters as well. The Jessie Kelly's government agent noted, 'It is a habit it appears in this part of Malaita to recruit and then swim off at night, 4 men have swum away from a Queensland ship recently.'33 Thus familiarity bred contempt.


33 Journal of J. Gaggin, Jessie Kelly, 25-6 August 1881.
The inhabitants of the bays, inlets, and small islands could profit as middlemen. One of the most important sources of profit was the provisioning of ships. The recruiting ships arrived in the islands with a full complement - people who were being returned - and these were replaced by recruits as the voyage progressed. All ships therefore required large supplies of water for drinking and cooking, yams and taro - for the islanders detested rice, which was sometimes substituted, and their health suffered on an unrelieved diet of it - and pigs, fish and coconuts were also in demand. The prices the recruiters had to pay for these provisions steadily mounted; as early as 1887 a government agent commented on the rise in price for yams at Wanderer Bay, Guadalcanal, where 'a tomahawk now buys much less', and on the haggling that took place over the price of coconuts at Maru Bay, San Cristobal. Similarly the people of Port Adam, Urassí Cove and Alite Bay, Malaita, raised their prices over the years, to the exasperation of the recruiters who were obliged to supply more and more knives, axes, pipes, tobacco and matches for their provisions. 34

The coastal people were able to play many other roles: they were rewarded for relaying the news of the arrival of a recruiting vessel to the people of the interior, and they found employment as

34 Journal of R. Haddock, Marion Rennie, 9, 11, 21 October 1877.
boats' crews and interpreters. Most important of all, they were strategically placed to gain a share of the presents given by the recruiters to the connections of volunteers, and, if more aggressively disposed, to impose a toll on those returning from abroad with a full 'bokus'. These roles and devices reflect the sophistication of the salt-water people, gained from their earlier contact with Europeans and their initial labour trade experience. The guides, interpreters and boats' crews were very often returned labourers themselves as, frequently, were the men who specialized in the taxing of bush people on their departure and return.  

Even if the migration of salt-water people had not been curtailed by their awareness of opportunities to acquire trade goods from the recruiters without leaving the islands, they could not have satisfied the colonies' labour requirements for long. Their numbers, always smaller than those of the bush people, were depleted in the first decade or so of recruiting. In 1881 a government agent noted that the north coast of Guadalcanal was 'played out', and that, although most of the people there spoke pidgin English or Fijian - indicating that many had been away and had returned - no more recruits were forthcoming because the inhabitants were still

35 See below pp. 149-50, 268-9.
awaiting the return of some men and were discontented at the length of absences. The recruiters on the same ship, the *Jessie Kelly*, met similar rebuffs at Wanderer Bay and Alite Bay. In the same year the *Sea Breeze* from Fiji was unable to get recruits on the west coast of South Malaita which, commented the government agent, 'seems almost depopulated'.

Late in 1880 the Fiji schooner *Flirt* arrived at Ulawa after experiencing very little success around Malaita and Guadalcanal. In fact the boats had been fired at from the beach on the west coast of Malaita, a sign that the older people were unwilling to allow young men to recruit. At Ulawa the recruiters' offers were declined and the government agent summed up the experience of the whole voyage.

Here as at other places, the natives said that they were anxious to recruit, but that as many of the people were away, had gone 4 years ago, and that until they were returned no more would be allowed to leave their homes.

The exhaustion of the supply of coastal recruits was hastened by a sharp increase in Melanesian recruiting in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Recruiting for Fiji stepped up after 1877.


and between 1878 and 1882 (when the colonies' attentions were diverted briefly to New Guinea and the adjacent islands) 8,287 labourers, of whom about half were Solomon Islanders, were introduced. In the same period 11,422 Melanesians left their islands for Queensland. Again, it is impossible to be precise about the places from which these people came, but it is likely that at least a quarter of them were from the Solomons. In these same years ships recruiting for Samoa entered the group and contributed to some extent to the depletion of the coastal population. In August 1881, for example, the Jessie Kelly was unable to get recruits at Wanderer Bay because the people there said that too many men were absent already, many of whom, the government agent learned, 'have gone to Samoa in steamers'. By the mid-1880s the small islands, in particular, began to drop out of the recruiters' calculations. Their requirements were met ever increasingly thereafter by people from the interior of the major islands in the group.

To secure people from the bush the recruiters had to change their methods and their work became more


40 Parnaby 1964:203.

41 Journal of J. Gaggin, Jessie Kelly, 13 September 1881.
arduous and dangerous. Where previously the ships could put into the bays and inlets and gather their recruits quickly from the coastal settlements and small islands, they now had to lie at anchor for days waiting for the bushmen to come down to the sea. Often the recruiters had to venture up creeks and rivers in the boats to contact them. Except at places where the bush people lived within a short walk of the coast, these expeditions up the rivers and creeks, and long stays at the most rewarding 'passages' became the routine of recruiting. The word 'passage' has several meanings: it is used to describe the points of entry through the reefs which surround many of the islands in the Solomons, but, in labour trade parlance, it meant the precise places on the coast from which recruits were taken aboard and whither they were to be returned. Points on the coast from which great numbers of recruits were obtained, therefore, became 'passages' in a special sense. These places enjoyed three advantages: they were deep-watered and sheltered enough to permit the ships to lie safely at anchor for a few days or longer, fresh water was obtainable at them, and, most important, they were places on which the footpaths
from the interior of the island converged.\textsuperscript{42}

Bushmen in the hills close to the coast could witness the arrival of the ships themselves. Those located further inland made their way down to the passages in response to messages sent from the coast. To alert the bushmen of their arrival, if no messengers were available and they were unable to see the water, the ships fired a cannon or exploded a dynamite cartridge. According to Thomas Elkington, who worked as a recruiter in the Solomons after the First World War, when this method was still in use, the sound of the explosion produced by firing a charge of gunpowder packed in a steel shaft and wadded with hessian bags would carry fifteen miles into the bush.\textsuperscript{43} Intending recruits could easily be alerted therefore, by one method or another, particularly on a narrow island like Malaita, from almost any point on which the coast could be reached by a day's

\textsuperscript{42} Some of the most well-worked passages were, on Bougainville, Elizabeth Augusta Bay and Queen Carola Harbour; on Ysabel, Thousand Ships Bay and Estrella Bay; on San Cristobal, Makira Bay, Eponi Bay, Wainoni Bay and Maru Bay; on Guadalcanal, Wanderer Bay, Talisi anchorage, Marau Sound, Aola and Taisimboko, and, on Malaita, Malu'u, Suaba Bay, Urassi Cove, Alite Bay, Coleridge Bay and Port Adam.

\textsuperscript{43} 'Notes of an interview with Mr T. Elkington by the Commissioner of Labour on 8th March 1968', TS in the office of the Commissioner of Labour, Honiara, BSIP.
walk. Recruits from the scattered inland hamlets converged on the 'passages' and severely taxed the government agents' ability to record the names of their 'villages'. Most often they did not make the attempt and simply entered the name of the 'passage', although the more alert of them, such as Reilly of the Mavis, were aware of the wide net they cast. In 1883 Reilly recorded that he had signed on recruits at Coleridge Bay, Malaita from among 'a great crowd of natives from all over Malaya'.

The cessation of the trade in arms and ammunition associated with labour recruiting also played a part in drawing the bush people into labour migration by removing an objection to their participation previously entertained by the coast dwellers. Until 1884 the most powerful inducement the recruiters could hold out to prospective volunteers was the opportunity to buy a musket (sometimes a rifle) and ammunition with the wages they earned in the colonies. Furthermore, it was usual for a rifle to be included among the presents which were given to the connections of recruits - kinsmen or persons of authority in the community - to

44 Journal of E. Reilly, Mavis, 7 June 1883; see also draft copy of Fiji's report on 'Polynesian Immigration 1883', enclosed in Thurston to C.O., 31 August 1885, CO 83/41, and an interview with Captain J. Mackay, an experienced master of labour ships, in Brisbane Mail, 19 April 1904.
secure their approval and legitimize the transation. Many hundreds of muskets and Snider rifles were sold to labourers departing from Queensland and Fiji in the 1870s and early 1880s, and few recruiting ships left port without a good supply of arms and ammunition. These items were essential aids to recruiting. To lack a store of guns could mean the failure of a voyage as those aboard the Daphne discovered in 1878 when, for this reason, they were unable to get recruits from Malaita, although Queensland ships which were well stocked with arms were enjoying great success. In 1878 an attempt was made to impose a limit upon the number of firearms and amount of ammunition that returning labourers could take back from Queensland. On hearing rumours that the government was considering stopping the exportation of guns

45 Immigration Agent to Under Colonial Secretary, 8 March 1880, QCSO, 1370/1880; Anson to Colonial Secretary, 21 December 1882, FCSO, 2974/1882; Mackay Mercury, 23 March, 24 July 1878.

46 Fowler 1968:19.

47 Wawn 1893:10; Cromar 1935:111.

48 Fiji Times, 14 December 1878. By this time the islanders could tell a good rifle from a bad. Those carried on the Fiji ship Winifred were very inferior and came apart when fired. These rifles were a poor advertisement for the vessel which had trouble getting recruits as a result, as well as the inconvenience and expense of having to replace the defective weapons when the islanders came back to the ship to protest about them. Journal of F.P. Bevan, Winifred, 9, 11 November 1883.
altogether, more than 200 islanders working at Maryborough expressed strong disapproval. They went *en masse* to confront Douglas, the Premier, who was then visiting the town, and their spokesman told him that, if they were forbidden to take back arms 'no more boys come along Queensland. Boys altogether go Fiji. Plenty guns along of Fiji'.

Not until six years later did the Queensland and Fiji governments, under imperial pressure, prohibit the giving of guns as recruiting presents and stop the returns from taking them back. Before this time thousands of firearms - very roughly one for each recruit and at least one for each return - had gone into the Solomons. They were mostly in the possession of the salt-water people who did not, as they did with other goods, trade them to the bushmen. Several of the coastal leaders - Taki of Wano Bay, Sono of Hada Bay, San Cristobal, Kwaisulia of Ada Gege in the Lau lagoon, and the chief on Ysabel, whose armoury comprised more than a hundred weapons 'many of them breech loaders and a few Winchesters' - built up

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49 *Mackay Mercury*, 6 April 1878.
considerable arsenals. At many places the coastal people's superior firepower enabled them to dominate the bushmen. Under these circumstances it was in the interests of the salt-water men to deny the bushmen access to the recruiters and their firearms. The ban on firearms started to take effect in 1884, and, from then on, the coast dwellers encouraged the recruiting of bushmen. The former now had no reason to fear that, by permitting them to make contact with the recruiters, the latter could arm themselves, resist attempts to 'tax' them, and become, generally,

50 On the introduction of guns to the Solomons at this time see Scarr 1967b:139. On the chiefs, see Selwyn to C.O., 6 July 1877, 'Correspondence relating to Proposal for an International Agreement Regulating the Supply of arms ammunition, alcohol and dynamite to the Natives of the Western Pacific', GBPP, LVIII, 1887:37; Martin to Commander-in-Chief, 7 January 1881, enclosed in papers relating to the Borealis massacre, CO 225/7. On Kwaisulia, in particular, see below pp.

51 For a good example of this situation, see Extract from the Official Journal of the Government Agent, Immigration Vessel, Winifred, 20 October 1886, enclosed in Corney to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1887, PSCO, 74/1887, quoted by Scarr 1967a:22.

52 For examples of the importance of firearms to the balance of power in an area, see Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 6 May 1891, RNAS, XXXVIII; Scarr 1967b: 253. In other contact situations the acquisition of firearms by some people and not by others has had similar effects. For example, with reference to the Plains tribes of American Indians in contact with fur traders in the eighteenth century, see Lewis 1942:20-1
more formidable enemies.

After 1884 only the ships recruiting for the plantations of Samoa and the plantations and mines of New Caledonia - to whom the ban did not apply - could supply arms and ammunition openly. New Caledonian ships worked mostly in the New Hebrides, seldom visiting the Solomons, but when they did, they gave Snider rifles as recruiting presents at the rate of one per man, and they paid for provisions and curios with rifles and cartridges. Recruiters for Samoa made occasional visits to the Solomons in the 1880s, 1890s and after the turn of the century. By giving rifles as presents, they enjoyed some success at San Cristobal, Guadalcanal and Malaita - particularly at Port Adam, Alite Bay, Manaoba, and Ataa Cove.

The recruiters for Queensland and Fiji were disgusted at the advantage their governments had bestowed upon their French and German competitors.

53 Woodford 'Diary', 4 June 1886; Brenan to Under Secretary, 10 October 1894, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 16 October 1894, GOV A 27; O'Brien to Brenan, 14 January 1895, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 27 February 1895, GOV A 28; Berkeley to C.O., 10 October 1895, CO 225/47; Pacific Islands Geographical Handbooks, III, 1944:450.

54 Woodford 'Diary', 4 June 1886; islanders' statements enclosed in Thurston to Senior Naval Officer, 12 November 1889, RNAS, XXXVIII; Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 29 August 1891, ibid.
Voyages to the Solomons and New Hebrides immediately after the ban on firearms were often unsuccessful, and some masters turned their attention north to New Guinea and the adjacent islands as a new and unsophisticated field where the demand for rifles was not yet established. This partial diversion from the New Hebrides and Solomons, however, did not last long. The recruiters used the rough tactics they had earlier employed in the southern groups, and the colonial administrations, quickly alerted to this, declared the northern waters out of bounds to the labour ships in 1885. After this the recruiters turned back to their old haunts in the New Hebrides and Solomons, particularly the latter.

THE Solomon Islanders preferred Queensland to Fiji, and both to Samoa and New Caledonia where the work was hard, correction severe, and whence few seemed to return. It is important to consider the causes and

55 Something of the recruiters' resentment is illustrated by lines in the song 'Recruiting':

We have to watch each isle, for the niggers though they smile,  
Will knock you over if they get a chance;  
For though rifles we don't sell  
They can get them just as well  
From ships that hail from Germany or France.

56 Corris 1968: passim.
nature of the preference for Queensland over Fiji, in particular, first because the acculturative effects of having worked in one place rather than the other were very different, and secondly because the preference illustrates the islanders' capacity to grasp and balance the advantages and disadvantages of the two colonies. In exhibiting preferences for some places over others, the islanders were playing an active role and not, as has been commonly supposed, submitting passively to the demands of the recruiters.

When the Fiji and Queensland recruiters first began to compete in the Solomons the islanders displayed no preference for either, although Fiji earned a bad reputation quite early because her ships were most frequently responsible for the initial kidnapping and deceit. There were, however, compensating factors for the Crown Colony. In 1879 the government agent of the Dauntless claimed that islanders preferred Fiji, the colony he represented, because they found the food there more familiar and acceptable and because treatment was better than in the Australian colony. In the following year a different officer on the same ship echoed this view:

The Malayta people are volunteering to work in Fiji because they get their native food. Some of them have been in Queensland and complained of the food, that frequently they are deprived of their Saturday half day, and that their masters are given to 'fighting them.'

He argued that if employers in Fiji kept faith with
the islanders the colony would continue to get a satisfactory supply of labour from the Solomons. 57

However, as the islanders' experience of labour migration increased, the advantages of familiar food and lenient treatment receded in importance. The government agents of the Fiji ships became acutely conscious of the greater attractiveness of Queensland, especially to the salt-water people. In 1881, Day of the Sea Breeze found an extreme reluctance to recruit for Fiji on Guadalcanal and Malaita. For example, one of the men engaged to accompany the vessel around Malaita as an interpreter was pleased with the payment he received and anxious to work abroad, but he chose to wait for a Queensland ship. The point was made most forcibly on the weather coast of Guadalcanal at a place where, although the people had an alternative method of earning European-produced goods, the superior attractiveness of Queensland was firmly established.

They are a very superior class of natives here, intelligent friendly and industrious. There is a very large town on the beach where they manufacture copra. A great number of them have lately returned from Queensland which place they speak of in terms of great praise, and there

57 Journal of C. Rebman, Dauntless, 12 December 1879; journal of F. Nicholls, Dauntless, 6 June 1880.
would be no difficulty for a vessel recruiting for that place obtaining a large number. 58

The Solomon Islanders knew the value of money by this time, and the fact that the wages in Queensland, at £6 per annum, were double those paid in Fiji had come to weigh heavily with them. Thurston's remark in 1877 that Fiji must double its wages or 'I am afraid that we shall very shortly fail to obtain any labourers from the Solomon Islands, and be in the same position there as we now are with respect to the New Hebrides', 59 was premature but was being partially borne out by the early 1880s.

Contemporaries usually reckoned the difference in wages to be the main cause of Fiji's early failure to obtain coastal people and of her later difficulties when competing against Queensland ships for bush recruits, but there were other reasons as well. The range and quality of trade goods available to returning labourers were superior in Queensland. Labourers there were paid at six monthly intervals. The payment was made under the supervision of the district Inspector of Pacific Islanders who also acted on the islanders' behalf if they wished to bank all or part of their wages. A great many took

58 Journal of J. Day, Sea Breeze, 14 May, 6 June 1881.

59 Message of J.B. Thurston to Legislative Council, printed in the Fiji Times, 14 July 1877.
advantage of this and consequently had saved most of their wages when the time came for them to leave the colony. On withdrawing their savings and collecting their final payment they were free to range through the 'Kanaka shops' of Maryborough, Bundaberg or Mackay where the storekeepers stocked the goods which appealed to the islanders. In Fiji the returns were mustered, taken to a store the owner of which had secured the government contract for the supply of goods to them, and were obliged to select from what was offering. This contract system was not to the islanders' advantage and was found unsatisfactory at times by officers of the colony's Immigration Department. In 1880 the contractor was discovered to be selling inferior and damaged items at an inflated price; he continued to do so despite a warning from the Department. The contractor committed a similar offence in 1882, and in that year it was remarked that the Fiji-grown tobacco, which was the only type stocked, was much disliked by the Melanesians

60 At first, upon the expiry of their indenture, the labourers in Fiji were obliged to buy their goods at stores of their employers' choice. This arrangement was so open to abuse - the employers frequently received a commission from the storekeepers - that the government introduced the contract system in 1879, see Wilkins 1953:100.
who preferred American twist. The following year the contractor had his concession cancelled for a time, but a Fiji Times reporter observed that the quality of goods stocked even after this was of unsatisfactory standard to his own eyes and to those of the returning labourer. About the latter he commented:

...it is a great mistake to suppose that he does not know the difference between a good axe and a bad one, a knife with a steel blade and its iron counterfeit, or a print of decent fabric and texture, and that which is mainly composed of 'dressing'.

In 1885 the Agent General of Immigration took steps to correct these shortcomings by displaying samples in his office so that tenderers for the contract would see the standard of goods they were obliged to stock. After this no further complaint about the quality of the goods was heard. But Fiji returns were still not able to buy tobacco in bond as could those leaving Queensland, and on balance, those returns from the former colony returned home less than half as well endowed as those from the latter because prices for

61 See Scarr 1967b:140, also Seed to Henry Cave and Co., 6 July 1880, FCSO, 1195/1880, and Anson to Colonial Secretary, 21 June 1882, ibid, 1546-1882.

62 Fiji Times, 5 May 1883.

63 Corney to Colonial Secretary, 5 September 1885, FCSO 2356/1885.
trade goods were much higher in Fiji than in Queensland, by as much as a third for some things.64

Another important reason for the greater success of Queensland is revealed by a comparison of the statistics on labour migration to both places. Between 1877 and 1910, 8,603 Solomon Islanders went to Fiji. Of these, 4,061 (47.2%) were returned to the group by 1914; the number who returned after that date was insignificant. Of the 4,542 who did not return, 1,853 (21.5%) died in the colony before 1914, and 2,687 (31.2%) elected to stay in Fiji.65 Such exact figures are not available for Queensland, but of the total number of Solomon Islanders who went there almost 75% returned.66 There was, therefore, a much higher rate of return from the Australian colony. There was never any compulsion upon the labourers to leave Fiji, as was the case in Queensland, and, from the early 1870s, many chose to stay. By 1885 there were some immigrant Melanesians so settled in the colony that they applied to lease land on Viti Levu in order to grow vegetables for the market.

64 Fiji Times, 17 October 1887; Woodford 'Diary', 13 May 1886; Wilkins 1953:56.

65 Calculated from 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'.

66 See Appendix I.
This request was recommended for approval to the Colonial Secretary by the Agent General of Immigration who thought the step would 'encourage industry, and help keep Polynesians out of the towns'.

The high rate of non-return for Fiji, whether occasioned by deaths or by individuals' decisions to remain in the colony - something which was not readily comprehended by the people who stayed at home - prejudiced the chances of Fiji's recruiters, and made their work more dangerous. There was no better way of ensuring success at a 'passage' than to put in with a party of contented returns. The islanders at home were able to keep accurate track of time and knew when to expect people back. Failure to return men, especially if they were people with important connections, often meant trouble for the recruiters; to return with the news that such men had died almost certainly did so. Through the late 1880s and in the following decade the recruiting boats and even the ships themselves were fired upon and otherwise attacked when returns were the bearers of the news that some

67 Corney to Colonial Secretary, 21 April 1885, FCSO, 1125/1885; Corney to Colonial Secretary, 21 January 1887, ibid, 142/1887; Legge 1958:265.

68 Woodford 'Diary', 17 July 1886; 'An Official View of the Labour Trade', The Wide Bay and Burnett Directory, 1887:pages unnumbered.
of their compatriots had died abroad. Two attacks on Queensland's *Young Dick*, one at Port Adam, the other at Sinerango in 1886 were occasioned by the deaths of the sons of important men of those places. A similar motive lay behind the attempts of the people of Ataa to cut out the *Helena* in 1892, threats to the *Para* in 1894, and the shooting at the boats of the *Sybil* and *Lochiel* in 1895. In that year there was a spate of attacks and shootings in attempts to avenge deaths in the colonies: at Kwai, Malaita, a reward of 8,000 porpoise teeth was out for the head of a European, and this made recruiting extremely dangerous all along the east.

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69 Brooke to Tryon, 8 May 1886, RNAS, XXXVIII; Rannie 1912:195-203. Woodford was informed that the attack at Sinerango was due to the son of a chief being shot by a member of the crew of a Fiji recruiting vessel - the diary entry does not make clear whether this occurred in Fiji or at Malaita. Woodford 'Diary', 23 May 1886. In 1968, however, an account was given of the affair to the present writer bymen at Sinerango, including the son of a man who took part. This account tallied with the documentary evidence as regards the number of islanders involved, casualties on both sides, and the sequence of events. It was insisted that the attack was made in reprisal for the death in Queensland of the son of Be'e, an influential man in the area, who planned and led the assault on the ship.

70 *Argus*, 12 December 1892.
coast.  

The murder of Palmer Bevan, the government agent of Fiji's *Saucy Lass*, at Maniwowo, San Cristobal, in 1888, was a clear case of revenge being taken for a death abroad. One of the men being returned by Bevan conspired and co-operated with the people of his own community to avenge the death of a companion who had died as a result of ill-treatment on the Penang plantation at Raki Raki. The unsuspecting government agent sent this man ahead to his village to inform the people of his arrival. He was killed by members of a reception party who had at first feigned a willingness to recruit.  

Almost invariably this revenge was not, as it was in this case, visited upon the ship and agent responsible for recruiting the person who had died, but came down indiscriminately upon the first ship along.

71 Extract from the log of the government agent of the *Para*, whilst anchored at Quai, Malayta, 7 January 1894, enclosed in Griffith to Governor, 22 March 1894, GOV A 26; Rason to Commander-in Chief, 19 September 1895, QCSO, 13398/1895; *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 1895.

72 See Scarr 1967b:171. The details of motivation, planning and execution were revealed by a close examination of witnesses, Melanesian and European, held in Suva by the Chief Police Magistrate, see Papers at FCOSO, 2331/1881, see also Mann to Fairfax, 18 October 1888, enclosed in Fairfax to Thurston, 27 January 1889, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 29/1889.
It was an axiom of the labour trade that extreme care was required at places from which it was known that immigrants to the colonies had died during their indenture.

These were extreme cases. When men were overdue, though alive and well on the plantations, the displeasure of their compatriots at home could still be incurred.\textsuperscript{73} Unless it was possible to convince the people that the absenteees had stayed of their own will, or placate them with presents, the recruiters might meet only hostility and lack of co-operation at the 'passage'. The ship could lie unsuccessfully at anchor for days in such cases, and fail to secure recruits along a whole coastline when the adverse news travelled fast.\textsuperscript{74}

Experienced government agents and recruiters endeavoured to be the bearers of comforting news, if possible, about absenteees when they called in at 'passages' they had worked previously.\textsuperscript{75} Men who


\textsuperscript{74} For example, see W.T. Wawn, 'Private Logs, 1888-1900', 26 November 1890, Mitchell Library.

chose to stay in Fiji for more than three years were encouraged to send messages and presents home via other returns and many did so. It became the practice in Fiji to dock the wages of Melanesians convicted of crimes rather than imprison them and extend their indenture.\textsuperscript{76} These precautions indicate how important it was that labour immigrants should not, if possible, be totally lost sight of by those who remained at home. However, more than the Queenslanders, the Fiji recruiters experienced the difficulties and took the losses which ensued when people expected home did not return.

WITH the paramountcy of Queensland and the concentration upon the bush people established, labour recruiting in the Solomons intensified and assumed a new character in the 1890s. After 1890 the Solomons quite replaced the New Hebrides as the main source of labour for Fiji. Calculations made in 1905 showed that between 1894 and 1905 the Solomons provided 81.4\% of Fiji's indentured island labour as against the New Hebrides 6.13\%, the Banks Islands 3.06\%, and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands 7.0\%.\textsuperscript{77} In the following years, 1906 to 1910, 1,251

\textsuperscript{76} Minute by Collett on Tryon to Thurston, 3 July 1886, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 136/1904; Tarte to Thurston, 28 March 1888, FCSO 1333/1888.

\textsuperscript{77} Agent General of Immigration to Colonial Secretary, (memo) 15 October 1905, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 136/1904.
men and women were recruited from Melanesia of whom all but fifty-six, 4.40%, were from the Solomons. The same trend - though it was less marked - was true of Queensland's recruiting: between 1890 and 1904 18,361 adult Melanesians were recruited of whom 9,374 were from the Solomons. This meant that the majority of Solomon Islanders venturing abroad went in the later years of the labour trade when the regulation of recruiting was at its most strict, when conditions on the plantations were at their best, and when the rewards for labour migration were at their highest.

After the violence and illegality of the New Guinea 'recruiting' had caused the labour trade to be held in greater obloquy than ever before, the governments of Queensland and Fiji felt impelled to put their houses in order. The Queensland government issued a pamphlet to its government agents which stressed the necessity for zeal in the performance of their duties as supervisors of recruiting. It became a rule that goods should be distributed to the connections of men who died in the colony by way of compensation for their deaths. There was also stricter inspection of the physical condition of recruits and returns than ever before. By the turn

78 'Annual Reports on Polynesian Immigration, 1906-1911', Fiji Legislative Council, 1907-1912.

79 See Parnaby 1964:203.
of the century the Queensland trade was governed by seven acts of Parliament, eighteen schedules, fifty-four regulations and thirty-eight instructions.  

Through the 1890s conditions on the plantations in Queensland and Fiji steadily improved. Mortality rates declined in both colonies, particularly in Fiji where Melanesians were now employed mostly on small, more healthily-situated copra plantations rather than on sugar estates as previously.

The demand for labour continued high in both colonies, and the value of the presents offered to attract recruits steadily mounted, as did the wages of boats' crews and interpreters. In 1892 the Queensland schooner Helena was giving trade presents to the value of £2 for each recruit; a typical gift consisted of '400 sticks of tobacco, 3 axes, 2 dozen fish-hooks, lengths of fishing line, 4 knives, a

80 Corris 1968:102-5.

81 Acting Agent General of Immigration to Colonial Secretary, 14 September 1882, FCSO, 2185/1882; Polynesian Immigration Report for 1891, ibid, 222/1893; draft report on Polynesian Immigration for 1897, ibid, 1180/1898.

82 The presents given to secure three recruits for Fiji's Saucy Lass at Makira Bay in 1888, for example, would not have sufficed for one recruit at Marau Sound, a comparable passage, in 1892, cf., papers at FCSO, 2331/1888, and Argus, 8 December 1892. See also Wawn, 'Private Logs...', 25, 29 March 1888.
belt sheath and knife, a pair of scissors, clay pipes, a dozen boxes of matches and some cloth'. Wages of boats' crews for the Fiji ships had risen to an average of between £2 and £2.10.0. — a considerable increase on the rates which had prevailed earlier.

Rewards on this scale attracted an increasing number of very young people to the recruiters' boats. This, in some places, so alarmed older members of their communities that they restrained by force boys who showed an indecent eagerness to take ship for the colonies, and fired at the boats to keep them from landing. In other cases the generous recruiting presents excited the cupidity of adults so that they urged to recruit boys so young that they had a very imperfect grasp of what they were undertaking. At the same time also the colonies began to receive an increasing proportion of 'old hands', men who had worked in one place or another before, and for whom wages were higher.

In the 1890s, therefore, the unsettling effects of labour migration upon Solomon Islands society became most apparent. They continued to be

83 Argus, 10 December 1892.
84 Acting Agent General of Immigration to Colonial Secretary, 28 July 1890, FCSO 2266/1890.
85 See below pp. 132-3.
revealed after the turn of the century until the repatriation of Pacific Islanders from Queensland was effected in 1907-08 and until the Fiji trade - which prospered between 1906 and 1909 - closed in 1911.
III

THE RECRUITS

THE two most important questions to be asked about the recruits are: who were they? why did they go? Fifty years ago, the author of a study of 'Kanaka Labour in Queensland' did not think to put these questions to the islanders themselves, although at that time there were more than a thousand of them still in Queensland. ¹ Today none of the original 'Kanakas' survive in Queensland, but in 1968 the present writer interviewed seventeen men who had left the Solomons as migrant labourers. Twelve of these men were living in the Solomons - six had worked in Queensland and six had worked in Fiji. In Fiji were five Solomon Islanders who had elected to remain in the colony: two of these had worked previously in Queensland, and one of them returned briefly to the Solomons before going to Fiji. Three of these seventeen informants had worked as indentured labourers in Tonga as well as Fiji, and three worked on plantations and ships in the Solomons after returning to the group from Queensland. Among these survivors of the colonial recruiting era there were also two men who were born of Solomon Islands parents in

¹ Molesworth 1917.
Queensland and were repatriated to Malaita when in their early 'teens. These informants, although only a tiny sample from the ranks of those who went through the migrant labour cycle, provided a body of first-hand information which has been used in conjunction with other oral evidence - stories about incidents and the recollections of old people - and with written records.

Solomon Islanders on beaches, in ships, on plantations, in churches, and in towns were observed and commented on by Europeans. In many of these accounts the islanders come to life, their behaviour is described and their speech is reported. Material in the files of government agencies which were concerned with migrant labour permits some statistical analyses of the recruits to be made. Documentary evidence on the careers of individual islanders is scanty, existing only for those who committed crimes in the colonies, gave evidence to commissions of enquiry, or particularly distinguished themselves after their return to the islands. Although from the 1890s there were some literate Solomon Islanders - men who attended church classes in Queensland and Fiji - none wrote an account of his experiences. However, despite the paucity of oral evidence and the shortcomings of the documents, sufficient material exists to make an examination of the motives and experiences of the Melanesian migrants possible.
THE overwhelming majority of Solomon Islands recruits were men. This was ensured by the requirements of the employers of indentured labourers, by regulations laid down by the colonial governments, and by circumstances in the islands. On most of the islands in the group, the chastity of single girls was of great importance to their marriage prospects, and, therefore, to the interests of their sponsors. On marriage, a bride price was paid, and a female kinswoman represented a significant investment which had to be protected, as the maximum sum could only be commanded by a virgin bride. There could, therefore, be no question of permitting single girls to leave the island on recruiting ships aboard which women frequently became prostitutes to Europeans and Melanesians for the duration of the voyage. Even where virginity was not of such great importance, young unmarried girls were nevertheless of value to their kin, who were extremely reluctant to allow them to be recruited.\(^2\) Regulations governing the Queensland

\(^2\) Codrington 1891:23, 27, 238-9; Rooney 1911:445; Fox 1924:204-9; Ivens 1927:6-7, 71; Ivens 1930: 93-100; Hogbin 1937:76-7; Hogbin 1939:47, 50; Russell 1950:11; Hogbin 1964:19-21. On the prostitution of women aboard recruiting vessels, see Anson to Colonial Secretary, 12 September 1882, FCSO, 2144/1882; journal of E. Reilly, Oamaru, 18 October 1882; 'Charges by Ernest Morrison in connection with the Polynesian vessel "Lavinia"', QVP, 1883-84; Immigration Agent to Principal Under Secretary, 26 October 1895, QCSO, 3457/1895.
labour trade stipulated that women were to be recruited only in the company of their husbands; Fiji's recruiters were permitted to engage single women if 'the circumstances be such that it appears probable that the rejection of any fugitive woman would entail her death'. These regulations severely limited female emigration because the majority of men recruited were not of marriageable age. Throughout Melanesia the age of marriage for men was comparatively late - about twenty-five or twenty-six in north Malaita for example - and most of the recruits were younger than this.

This, of course, outlines an ideal system in which rules were adhered to by Europeans and islanders. For the most part they were, but there were exceptions. Although the practice does not seem to have been as common in the Solomon Islands as in the New Hebrides, young couples and unhappily married people eloped to the recruiting ships which did indeed act, on such occasions, as 'the Gretna Green, nay the divorce court of the islands'. Nor was it unknown for recruiters, and particularly tolerant government

3 See copy of letter of instruction to government agents in QCSO, 4842/1882; 'Regulations...respecting the recruiting and returning of Polynesian Immigrants...', ECSO, 2577/1891.


5 Selwyn 1894:374.
agents to accede to the request of a single girl to be taken aboard and to legitimize her recruitment by 'marrying' her to one of the recruits. Such cases, however, were rare in the Solomons. The illicit recruiting of women was almost certain to cause the islanders to turn against the recruiters. For example, when Fiji's Hally Bayley recruited some Ysabel women against the wishes of their community, a fleet of canoes was sent in pursuit of the ship. Only a timely warning, given by a native Melanesian Mission teacher, prevented the avenging party from attacking, by way of reprisal, the Queensland schooner Isabella which happened to be working a little further along the coast.

In 1888 the recruiter of Queensland's Madeline was warned at San Cristobal against recruiting unmarried women on Malaita where, he was told, they were strictly guarded and the islanders' anger would be great if any were taken. He took this to heart and most other recruiters seem to have done likewise. Documentary and oral evidence agree that very few Malaitan women, for instance, left their island for

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6 For examples of the illicit recruiting of women, see Galloway to Under Colonial Secretary, 2 October 1890, QCSO, 10346/1890; Bremer to Commander-in-Chief, 9 October 1895, CO 225/50; Immigration Agent to Principal Under Secretary, 26 October 1895, QCSO, 3457/1903, and extensive correspondence on a case in ibid, 4923/1903.

7 Penny 1888:133-6.

the colonies. And precautions taken against the recruiting of women from Gela must have been almost infallible. According to John Cromar, who had more than twenty years' experience as a labour recruiter, no women from the island were ever recruited for Queensland. In 1906 some Gela men said that only 'about two' women had ever gone to Queensland. 9

These impressions are borne out by official records: on a list of 12,177 Melanesians landed at Maryborough between 1865 and 1904 - about one-fifth of all islanders brought to Queensland - no Gela women appear. 10

Very few women were ever recruited for the colonies. In Queensland there were 5,975 Melanesians present in 1881 of whom only 373 (6.2%) were females. In 1891 there were 9,428 Melanesians of whom 826 (8.7%) were females. Ten years later, when considerably more than half the islanders in the colony were Solomon Islanders, only 671 (7.3%) were females. 11 In Fiji the position was similar: between 1885 and 1886 7.5% of Fiji's recruits were women. According to the Agent General of Immigration this

9 Queenslander, 29 December 1906; Cromar 1935:281.

10 'List of Pacific Island Labourers, Dec. 1865-Jan. 1904'.

figure 'exhibits little difference between that of other years'. The figure averaged 8.2% between 1886 and 1892, and stood at 8.5% in 1903, 'the customary low proportion'.

The majority of recruits were unmarried and were, therefore, mostly in their early twenties or younger. In the register of Melanesian immigration to Fiji, very few men are entered as being thirty or more years of age, and the same is true of the few ships' contract lists which survive. People were rejected on arrival in the colonies on account of disabilities or extreme youth, but only one instance of a man being rejected on arrival because he was too old has been found. Old men were never acceptable, but, as time went on, an increasing number of very young men were recruited, so that the average age of recruits in the 1890s was younger than in the previous two decades.

From the beginning of recruiting in the Solomons, very young boys offered themselves to the ships, but the recruiters and government agents were

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12 Agent General of Immigration to Acting Colonial Secretary, 30 November 1887, FCSO, 3849/1887; 'Annual Report on Polynesian Immigration 1903', Fiji Legislative Council, 1904.

13 Galloway to Under Colonial Secretary, 13 February 1893, enclosed in Norman to Ripon, 7 March 1893, 'Further Correspondence relating to Polynesian Labour in the Colony of Queensland', GBPP, LXX, 1895:1
reluctant to take them, especially as they were finding no difficulty in securing older, stronger men. Under the 1884 regulations, Queensland's recruiters were forbidden to take boys under sixteen years of age; until 1891 recruiters for Fiji were permitted to engage youths at the rate of two to one adult, but after that date the permission of the Agent General of Immigration was required if it was intended to recruit youths under the age of sixteen.

These regulations were ignored by the recruiters, often as a result of the exigencies of the recruiting situation. Concern about the youth and physical capacity of recruits showed itself in Queensland in 1887 when it was reported that, of the 280 Pacific Islanders on the CSR Company's Victoria plantation, no fewer than eighty were 'youths of from twelve to thirteen years'. There were fewer boys at Goondi plantation but still 'about thirty' in this category out of a total of 200 indentured labourers. The government attempted to prevent the recruitment of small boys by stipulating in 1892 that government agents were to measure the chests of all volunteers and reject those who did not stretch the tape to

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14 See, for example, journal of R. Haddock, Marion Rennie, 25 September 1877.

15 Scarr 1967b:145.

16 General Manager's Outward Letter Books for Fiji, no. 4, 1887-8, memo 20 July 1887, CSRCA, Sydney.
thirty-two inches. Informants say that this was sometimes done and sometimes not, and that the most common test of age—inspection of the quantity of pubic and under-arm hair—was perfunctory at best.

Many very young men were able to pass the scrutiny of the government agents. Inspection by a medical officer when the ship arrived in the colony afforded a further check against the introduction of boys younger than sixteen, but the zeal of these officers varied enormously. Seven of the recruits brought from the Solomons by the Sybil in 1894 were rejected on account of their youth, and the matter reached serious dimensions when in 1902, twenty-two of the Sydney Belle's complement were rejected for this reason. The matter gave concern to employers of island labour in Queensland throughout the 1890s. In 1901 the CSR Company, one of the largest employers, issued strict instructions to its shipping agents to impress upon the masters of vessels recruiting

17 'Additional Instruction to Government Agents', QVP, II, 1892.

18 Brenan to Principal Under Secretary, 25 January 1894, enclosed in Colonial Secretary to Governor, 31 January 1894, GOV A26.

19 Smart to Manager, 5 May 1902, Melbourne and Mackay Sugar Company, Alexandra Plantation Letter Book, 1900-06. John Smart was manager of the Alexandra plantation at Mackay, the records of which are in the office of the Australian Estates Company, Melbourne.
for the Company's plantations the necessity of securing men who were old enough to stand the work. The manager of one of the Company's plantations wrote that he was dissatisfied with the standard of the medical inspection at some of the 'southern ports'. He had, for example, more confidence in the doctor at Lucinda than at Bundaberg, the failure of the latter and his ilk being that they were 'inclined to give the benefit of the doubt to the owner'.

The same trend was apparent in Fiji where there were many complaints about the youth and poor physique of recruits in the 1890s. After the turn of the century Fiji recruited a very high proportion of youths. In that colony newly introduced men were allowed to rest for about a week at the Immigration Department depot before being allotted to their plantations. It was also the practice to set newcomers only light tasks in the first six months of their indenture. It seems that those in charge of recruiting believed that, under these circumstances, young boys could be recruited without harm. This

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21 MacGregor to Colonial Secretary, 17 March 1880, FCSO, 483/1880; Acting Agent General of Immigration to Colonial Secretary, 14 September 1882, ibid, 2185/1882.
was not the view of Woodford, however, who, on inspecting the recruits aboard the Lady Norman in 1904, found them all healthy and sound; but, although all were more than fourteen years old there were a great many who were younger than sixteen. He considered it scandalous that these youths were engaged at a special rate of £2 per annum, and it further offended him to learn that some of those engaged as adults at £3 per annum, were re-classified as youths and had their wages re-assessed at £2 or lower on arrival in Fiji.

Some informants provided examples of the ways in which very young islanders came to be recruited. 'Pita' Gereeka and 'Alick' Hunahua, both Malaitans, were recruited by the Clansman in 1906 and 1907 respectively when each was about fourteen years old. According to them the ship's recruiter was not interested in taking fully grown men, and the majority of their fellow recruits on these voyages were of an

22 See correspondence in WPHC, Inward Correspondence, General, 136/1904, especially Woodford to High Commissioner, 15 August 1904, Woodford to High Commissioner, 11 June 1907, minutes by A.R. Coates, Agent General of Immigration, 18 October 1904, 29 April 1907. In 1906 the High Commissioner licensed the Solomon Islands trading firm of Darbyshire and Harding to collect recruits, hold them at their station on Guadalcanal, and deliver them to the government agent of the Clansman. This experiment, made in the face of strong opposition from Woodford, resulted in the recruitment of many 'weedy youths' and was discontinued. See Woodford to High Commissioner, 12 May 1906, ibid, and Coates' minute of 29 April 1907.
age with them and, like them, volunteered out of a spirit of adventure. Both worked initially for less than £3 per annum: Hunanua's wage was £1.5.0. at first, and Gereeka recalled that, after three years of work on a Taveuni plantation, he entered an agreement to work for a further four years at £3 per annum, which was an increase in wages. Similarly, Toania Bulikini, another Malaitan, was entered on the Clansman's register for 1906 as a 'youth'. His first job was on a cattle station near Suva where he was under indenture for three years. He was paid £4 for the three years' work.

Fiji, then, recruited very young men quite deliberately for economic reasons. Generally speaking, the recruitment of young men to Queensland seems to have been less deliberate. An example is provided by 'Tommy' Taeova of Tatonga, a coastal village in the Logu district on the west coast of Guadalcanal. He was recruited when about fourteen years of age by the Sybil in 1894. Taeova was accepted by the government agent of the vessel because his brother, who was fully grown, insisted that he would recruit only if Taeova accompanied him. When the ship arrived in Maryborough the medical inspector wanted to reject Taeova for being under age, but his brother again insisted that he would not agree to work without him. The doctor bowed to this and Taeova was permitted to enter the colony, although he was assigned only light work in the first year and was not placed under indenture
until the end of it. 'Willie' Kabarago, a bushman from the Visali area of south-east Guadalcanal, was recruited by the Roderick Dhu in 1896 when about fourteen. The manner of his recruitment was unusual in that he was taken aboard with a party of fellow Guadalcanal men who were then on Savo trading for pigs. Kabarago was taken because the recruiter did not wish to antagonize other members of this party, which represented a real 'catch'. On arrival in Queensland, Kabarago was accepted, apparently for the same reason, but he did no work for the first eighteen months. These five cases of the recruitment of youths represent only a minute sample, but they indicate the way in which Fiji set out to recruit young men, and how the Queensland recruiters were forced to accept them.

In contrast to the extreme youth of a large number of the recruits from the Solomon Islands in the 1890s and later was the age of the 'old hands' from the group. Men made second and third trips abroad from the earliest days of the labour trade. As early as 1878 it was reported of men returning to the Solomons on the Isabella that 'Many of them expressed their intention to return to Mackay, after spending a few months with their friends in the islands.'

23 Mackay Mercury, 14 December 1878.
Queensland from the Solomons typically carried what
Scarr has called 'a strong leaven of old hands
recruiting for another term'. Some men had remarkable
careers in this respect: a man from Ontong Java who
was returning from Fiji in 1886 had been involved in
labour migration for almost twelve years - nine years
in Queensland and three in Fiji. Another return on
the same ship, a Malaitan, had spent time in Queensland
and Fiji, and announced his intention of going to
Samoa when an opportunity presented itself.

In the 1890s there was a consistently high
proportion of Solomon Island old hands coming to
Queensland: between 1892 and 1903 27.5% of the recruits
were in this category. In one year the figure reached
35.5%, and it never fell below 22.3%: the voyage
of the *Sybil* in 1893, on which twenty-seven out of
a total of 110 Solomon Islanders recruited had worked
previously in Queensland, Fiji, Samoa or New Caledonia,
was not atypical.

Powerful inducements were held out by
recruiters to returned labourers. Experienced men were

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25 Woodford 'Diary', 18 April, 3 June 1886.

26 Calculated from the Registrar-General's reports,
published in *QVP*.

27 Immigration Agent to Under Colonial Secretary, 6
June 1893, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor,
20 July 1893, GOV A25.
in great demand particularly in Queensland. It was usual for them to be engaged for £12 per annum - double the going rate for 'new chums'. In 1885, with reference to the imminent departure of the Fearless, the CSR Company informed its shipping agents that it would look favourably upon a concerted effort to get Solomon Islanders who had worked abroad before to whom it would pay £12 per annum. It was thought that hardy old hands would be best suited to the 'trying climate' of the Hambledon estate at Mackay. The Company's spokesman added that, not only would it be willing to pay the bonus wages, but 'perhaps it might be worthwhile to give the vessel an additional £1 per head for able bodied male recruits who had served before'.

Armed with these inducements for the islanders and incentives for themselves, the recruiters were energetic in their attempts to recruit veterans.

In 1883 old hands made up only 7.3% of Fiji's recruits. Two years later they made up 25% of the total and continued to do so until the late 1890s.

28 Rankin, O'Kane and Co., to Parbury Lamb and Co., 29 July 1885, CSRCA, B 202 (3); Knox to Parbury Lamb and Co., 18 December 1886, ibid, B 203 (1).

29 Calculated from the 'Annual Reports on Polynesian Immigration', see reports for 1885 and 1886, FCSO, 3849/1887; 1884 ibid, 225/1892; 1892 ibid, 3346/1893; 1895 ibid, 3622/1896.
Unlike their counterparts in Queensland, employers in Fiji preferred raw recruits to experienced men. The work on copra plantations was not arduous, and employers found the 'new chums' not only cheap but docile as well. There was a tacit understanding between employers and recruiters that the latter should avoid engaging experienced men if possible. On some occasions this policy was easy to implement because experienced men were reluctant to work in Fiji for half the wages they would get in Queensland. However, for many returned labourers their eagerness to work abroad once more was more powerful than their patience, and the Fiji recruiters were obliged to accommodate them.

The contract list of the Rotuma for a voyage in 1896 illustrates the way in which Fiji's recruiters at this time were striking a balance between veterans and very young boys. Ninety-three of the 117 recruits aboard were Solomon Islanders, one of whom died on the voyage. Twenty-eight of the islanders were aged sixteen years or less (30.1%); forty were between seventeen and twenty-four (43%), and twenty-five were twenty-five years of age or older (26.8%). Of the twenty-five men in the latter

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30 See minutes of the Agent General of Immigration, 20 August 1899, 4 August 1900, on FCSO, 4088/1899; Polynesian Immigration Report, 1899, ibid, 815/1900.
group, twenty had worked abroad previously. Of the ten men whose age was entered as thirty, eight had done so. One of the other two died on the voyage, perhaps indicating that he had not been accepted before because of unfitness and should not have been taken on this occasion.\(^{31}\) In 1900 55\% of Fiji's recruits were old hands and they continued to be highly represented until the close of recruiting. Queensland ceased to recruit in 1904, and in the next year 40\% of Fiji's recruits were experienced men. When in 1908 more than 300 Melanesians - almost all of whom were Solomon Islanders - went directly to Fiji from Queensland, 50\% of the Crown Colony's intake had had previous experience.\(^{32}\)

Very broadly, over the forty-one years in which Solomon Islanders were recruited for work abroad, about 25\% of them were youths of about sixteen or less, about the same percentage were old hands, and the remainder were unmarried men in their late 'teens and early twenties.

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\(^{31}\) The contract list for this voyage is enclosed in the government agent's journal, F. Otway, Rotuma. The Rotuma seems to have specialized in the recruiting of old hands; on a later voyage the vessel returned from the Solomons with 104 recruits, of whom thirty-seven (35.5\%) were old hands, Agent General of Immigration to Assistant Colonial Secretary, 1 November 1899, PCSO, 4852/1899.

\(^{32}\) 'Annual Reports on Polynesian Immigration, 1900-1908', Fiji Legislative Council, 1901-1909.
DEFENDERS of the labour trade often pointed to the high rate of re-recruiting as evidence that the islanders were not coerced.\(^{33}\) It was a good argument, and there is much evidence that experienced men knew exactly what they were about when they signed on. In a great many cases, old hands stipulated that they wished to receive cash on arrival in the colony to the value of the present which would normally have been given to their relations and friends. Fully 30% of the Helena's recruits in 1892 were old hands, most of whom made this stipulation. A batch of five old hands taken aboard at Gela exemplified remarkably the effects of their earlier experience in their decision to re-engage and the terms to which they would agree. Of the five, four had worked previously in Queensland and were to receive £10 per annum; the fifth had worked in Samoa and was to get £9 per annum. The men

\(^{33}\) Finch-Hatton 1885:163; Wawn 1893:270-1. In 1894 Queensland's Chief Secretary used the argument in replying to John G. Paton's frenzied and unbalanced attacks on the labour trade. He pointed out that, on the twelve voyages of Queensland ships immediately previous to the time of writing, 965 recruits had been secured, of whom 285 (29.6%) were old hands. Nelson to Norman, 16 March 1894, enclosed in Norman to C.O., 18 May 1894, CO 234/59. In 1901 Queensland's Immigration Agent put the argument forcibly; after mentioning the rate of re-recruiting he commented, 'For, mark you, we have not been breaking new ground, as the Solomon and New Hebrides Groups may be called a Pacific Island Labour market or Bureau where our character and inducements have been known for more than a generation.' Brennan to Under Secretary, 9 October 1901, QSA, PRE 87.
insisted that they wanted to receive half of the value of the recruiting present in cash in Bundaberg, and the gifts given to their connections were reduced accordingly. The newspaper correspondent aboard the Helena remarked upon their caution, born of experience:

They had been frequenting the ship on the previous day, interviewing our previous recruits and taking notes of the vessel and its management under the guise of vendors of shells. Theirs was, therefore, no rash step, but the deliberate procedure of experienced men, who had prudence to look before leaping.34

The experienced men re-recruited for a variety of reasons. Some, such as the two men aboard the Christine mentioned above, had been engaged in labour migration for so long that they had become alienated from their original surroundings. Indeed the request that presents be not given to relations is an indication that an individualism and independence, foreign to the traditional values of the islanders, had been born in the experienced labour migrants. Lihoo, a native of Alite Bay, who was returning to Malaita on the Rotuma in 1899, was a particularly hardened case. The government agent found it worthwhile to record the details of his determined stand.

Lihoo told me he wanted to return to Fiji, I told him he would have to be

34 Argus, 8, 10, 12, 17 December 1892; see also journal of E. Reilly, Oamaru, 29 September 1882; Rannie 1912:181-2.
landed first. His people wanted to 'be paid'. But Lihoo would not let them have anything, he told them he wanted all the money he could get from the ship, they would have to wait until he came back. 35

Others returned to their homes with the intention of remaining, but found that conditions there had changed radically. They found that relations had died, that their communities had disintegrated through death or warfare, or that they met a hostile reception from relatives. 36 'Diau' Raumaitau, who left a bush settlement in the Kwara'ae district of Malaita for Queensland in the Lochiel in 1903, provides an example. He did not ask permission of anyone and no present was given for him. 'It was my wish', he said, 'the old people did not tell me to go. I just went. I just ran away and got into the boat.' Repatriated to the Solomons by the Malaita in 1907, he found himself


36 For examples of this kind of re-recruiting, which often meant that the returns spent only minutes on shore, or did not land at all, see journal of J.J. Fletcher, Winifred, 6, 8 September 1884; journal of A. Coates, Sea Breeze, 29 November 1884; Woodford 'Diary', 26 May, 17 June 1886; Wawn, 'Private Logs...', 9 September 1888; Argus, 7 December 1892; journal of F. Otway, Rotuma, 5 August 1899; Brenan to Under Secretary, 6 October 1902, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 13 October 1902, GOV A35; extracts from W.H. Hazleton's diary of proceedings in connection with the Queensland labour vessel Sydney Belle, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 22 July 1904, GOV A37.
unwelcome at his home. Speaking of his mother's attitude to him and his box of goods he said, 'She was angry. She swore at me, and I didn't go into the house. She said, "Don't bring those things here, go and throw them in the sea...." My father was dead. I did the things for him and then I left.' He recruited for Fiji on the Clansman after eight months on Malaita. In his case it would seem that his earlier disobedience had turned his relations against him; he was blameworthy in some way for being absent when his father died, and these circumstances combined to make his position uncomfortable in his community.

The reasons for re-recruiting could be more immediately personal, such as those that prompted Tolimcane, the father of another informant. Tolimcane was recruited from an island in the Langalanga lagoon by the Fearless in the 1880s. After three years in Queensland he returned in the same ship to find that the women he was by arrangement to have married had married already. In anger and disappointment at this he elected not to land and returned to Queensland. He was lost to Malaita until 1907 when he returned as a Christian missionary.

Some men, who had originally recruited to escape punishment for the breaking of a tabu, or who had left for fear of being involved in a vendetta, returned to find their crime unforgiven or their position still vulnerable, and elected to go abroad
once more. On some occasions, when a party of men from a single community recruited, one of their number was held responsible for the well-being of all. If the people in his charge did not all return alive and well, the appointed leader could be in danger; this helps to explain the instances of returns deciding to re-engage on the ship and refusing to venture ashore. 37 Other reasons for which men re-recruited reflect less well on the conduct of the labour trade. Some men, especially bush people who had recruited when very young and stayed abroad for an extended period, were unable to recognize their passage on the return voyage. This problem was especially likely to arise if the government agent's log entry had been careless. Sometimes, too, the patience of ships' captains ran short and, rather than waste time searching for a passage, they preferred to risk the displeasure of the Immigration Department by making for home with the 'return' still aboard. Such difficulties and infringements of the regulations, however, seem to

37 Hopkins 1928:118-9, and Hopkins 'Autobiography': 39, TS, Auckland, Melanesian Mission Office, microfilm copy Department of Pacific History, ANU.
have been rare. 38

RECRUITING was a means of escaping from local pressures for 'new chums' as well as for old hands. Certain aspects of the ordering of society in the Solomon Islands made it likely that recruiters would be successful there, quite apart from the attractiveness of travel and the opportunity to acquire European goods. Before marriage young men lacked a defined and demanding social role, and this probably disposed them to accept the recruiters' offers. Only in those few areas where young men were initiated into secret societies or went through puberty rites, was it imperative for reasons of religion or ritual that they should remain at home. Had this been the rule rather than the exception, the Solomons, and Melanesia generally, would not have been vast labour pools; for, as Blackwood discovered on Buka in the 1930s, puberty rites acted as a check on recruiting. She wrote of one Buka village:

Proportionately fewer people were away from this village than usual, because

38 Bruce to Wilson, 4 June 1881, 'Correspondence respecting the Natives of the Western Pacific and the Labour Traffic', GBPP, XLVII, 1883:46; Fiji, government agents' journals, no. 50 (names of agent and ship unknown), 23 December 1883; annotation by B.G. Corney on journal of A. Coates, Sea Breeze; journal of J. Blyth, Glencairn, 18 October 1885; Woodford 'Diary', 12 May 1886.
a taboo prevented the adolescent boys and the young men who were their sponsors from signing on as indentured labourers until after the performance of the Watawuf ceremony, an important part of the boys' puberty rites.39

In other places, where there was no great pressure on young people to work, and where they had no prestige or hope of social advancement until age and years of industry brought their rewards, they naturally seized the opportunity to enliven the intervening years by travelling to the colonies. Labour recruiting provided diversion and adventure at a dull and, to the extent that young people found themselves at odds with the gerontocrats in their communities, a frustrating time.

By the 1890s, labour recruiting had become an initiation of a sort, an experience which a young man needed to go through in order to be considered a sophisticate. This was apparently the attitude, for example, of the man encountered on a north Malaita

39 Blackwood 1935:24. The motives of Melanesians who recruit for plantation work at the present time do not seem to differ greatly from those of their nineteenth century counterparts. The wish to escape from the dullness of village life, the desirability of European goods and the attractiveness of travel are still powerful forces; the most important difference is that to-day New Guineans and Solomon Islanders require cash to pay taxes, and many seek employment for this reason, see Hogbin 1939:passim, and 1951:passim.
beach by the Christine's recruiters in 1886. He had himself worked for six years in Fiji and was anxious for his son to have a similar experience. By the 1890s, especially in the hinterlands of the popular Malaita and Guadalcanal passages, young men could reasonably expect to be given a chance to go abroad. Although it was never clearly stated, there seemed to be, in the reminiscences of some informants, a feeling that their migration was in the natural course of events. The strength of this feeling is demonstrated by the behaviour of young islanders when they learned that Queensland had ceased recruiting. Europeans who were in the islands in the years following the end of the Queensland trade recall being constantly asked, 'Queensland i open?' When the rumours spread, as they did periodically over the next few years, that the Queensland trade had indeed re-opened, hundreds of young men came out to mission boats and trading schooners, and accosted Europeans on the beaches, to offer themselves as recruits.

On occasion older people were opposed to the migration of young men from their communities. This was usually because it was thought that too many

40 Woodford 'Diary', 27 May 1886. For the operation of similar pressures upon young African labour migrants, see Schapera 1933:396, 1934:47.

41 Information from Mr R.J.S. McBride who worked in the Solomon Islands with the South Sea Evangelical Mission for many years beginning in 1911, see also Scarr 1967a:24.
men were absent already, and that the group was reduced in strength *vis-à-vis* potential enemies. In this event, would-be recruits were restrained by force on the beach, or pulled out of the boats if their eagerness to recruit had taken them so far. At other times, especially when the ship in question was reputed to be in poor condition, badly handled, or when there was much sickness aboard it, a *tabu* could be placed on volunteering to join the vessel and this appears to have been an effective deterrent. Failing these measures however, it was comparatively easy for determined young men to move down the coast from the village or usual passage, and signal the ship's boats in to a stretch of beach by means of a 'smoke'. Experienced recruiters avoided taking these runaways without payment, especially on Malaita, where community disapproval was likely to be expressed by an attack on the next labour vessel along. In deference to this sensitivity, some recruiters chose to sail back to the runaway's passage and ensure that at least some trade goods changed hands. However, many runaways were taken from Guadalcanal, Ysabel and Gela. On the latter two islands, Melanesian mission

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42 For example see Wawn 'Private Logs...', 8 January 1891; *Argus*, 12 December 1892; Rannie 1912:184-5.

teachers strongly disapproved of labour recruiting, and the picking up of runaways became almost the standard method of operation. Some Gela and Ysabel men seem to have preferred the attractiveness of labour migration to the consolations of religion; others, apparently, resented the new authority and prestige of native teachers and recruited out of resentment. By the 1890s, however, returns were bringing news of the schools in Queensland and Fiji, and a few cases are recorded of Gela and Ysabel converts recruiting for the colonies in the hope of receiving further and better instruction there.

Some observers of the labour trade recognized that the giving of presents to relations and friends of the recruits was a practice well adapted to Melanesian ideas of compensatory and expiatory payments. This was argued, for example, in 1892 by the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Station. He insisted on the need for recruiting presents and that compensatory payments be made for people who died while under indenture because,

44 Argus, 8, 17 December 1892; Wawn 1893:244-6. Native teachers of the Melanesian Mission were even more opposed to labour recruiting than European missionaries. They resented the attractiveness of the colonies, and suffered a loss of prestige when their converts recruited. It is likely, also, that their opposition was prompted by a fear that men would return from the colonies more sophisticated and better instructed in Christianity than themselves.
Among the New Hebrideans and Solomon Islanders every individual has a value so far as he can benefit those with whom he is associated.  

By continuing to permit recruiters to give presents—despite charges by opponents of the labour trade that this made all recruiting smack of slave-trading—and by approving the distribution of trade goods to the connections of those who had died whilst under indenture, the colonial governments showed some understanding of the values and assumptions of the islanders. The Melanesians made a distinction between people being 'bought' and 'stolen'. Somewhat confusingly, to be 'bought' was to be legitimately recruited, which meant that a present had been given; a man was considered to be 'stolen' when no present was given. According to informants on Guadalcanal and Malaita, the recruiting presents were most often claimed by the recruit's father and brothers. People who had recruited, however, did not entertain the idea that their fathers and brothers had pressured

45 Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 4 March 1892, RNAS, V: Commander-in-Chief to Governor of Queensland, 16 March 1892, ibid.

46 Journal of J. Blyth, Glencairn, 17 September 1885; Griffith to Governor, 25 March 1892, GOV A22; Immigration Agent to Under Colonial Secretary, 6 June 1893, enclosed in Norman to C.O., 26 February 1893, CO 234/57.

47 Ivens 1918:224.
them to volunteer in order that they might receive presents. Rather, and there is documentary evidence on the point, the offer of presents, and promises the prospective recruit made about the distribution of the contents of his 'bokus', broke down the reluctance men felt about their kinsman's departure. 48

The vengeful and feuding nature of Solomon Islands life also worked to make the recruiters welcome. Life was frequently very insecure until comparatively recent times. Old men vividly recall going in fear of their lives at times when neighbouring communities were at war, or when a feud - which could only be settled by an expiatory sacrifice - was in progress. In 1887 the government agent of the Fiji schooner Winifred saw an example of Malaitans wishing to avoid such a situation. He recorded his reluctance at refusing six very young boys on account of their youth although, 'The poor little fellows were very anxious to get away, as there is a lot of fighting going on amongst the bushmen now.' 49 There was the ever-present danger too of

48 For example, journal of J. Day, Sea Breeze, 21 May 1881; Woodford 'Diary', 25 May 1886. This was the case with an informant, 'Edwin' Manuna, who was recruited from the bush village of Anfau above Suaba Bay, north Malaita, by Queensland's Coquette, in 1903.

49 Extract from the Official Journal of the Government Agent, Immigration Vessel, Winifred, 20 October 1886, enclosed in Corney to Colonial Secretary, 13 January 1887, PCSO, 74/1887.
being accused of sorcery when some traumatic event required explanation, and some men recruited to avoid such a charge. 50

"The recruiters learned to adapt their strategies to conditions of life in the islands. It was common, for example, for them to look for signs of conflict between island communities in the hope of syphoning off refugees. One recruiter was frank about this method:

The best time to get them was during tribal warfare.... Fairly easy then, for they took to the water to escape their enemies and we would grab them. 51

There were other escapees of a different kind, men who had been taken captive in raids and kept as semi-slaves on another island or in enemy territory. A few instances of Guadalcanal men escaping to recruiting ships from their captors on Savo are recorded, and there are similar reports for Buka, Ulawa and Malaita. 52

Markets between bush and salt-water people also offered opportunities to recruiters and security


51 Norden 1926:34-5.

52 Gore to Under Colonial Secretary, 15 February 1881; GBPP, XLVII, 1883:33; journal of E. Reilly, Oamaru, 25 August 1882; journal of J. Blyth, Glencairn, 11 October 1885; Woodford 'Diary', 12 May 1886.
to returns. Recruiting ships often anchored at places where markets were held and waited for market day, when they might hope to recruit some volunteers from the bush through the intermediacy of the coastal people. Those returning on the ship were usually happy with this procedure because it meant that they might meet some of their fellow bushmen on the beach and thus be assured of an escort to their homes. If this happened they would have protection against the salt-water men, who might otherwise insist on levying a tax on their goods in return for allowing them to pass from the beach in safety. There might also be the added bonus of recruiting presents coming the return's way if any of his relations or friends among those present at the market were willing to volunteer. 53

Ceremonial occasions were less certain to be favourable for the recruiters. Sometimes, feasts and dances favoured the recruiters' designs, and they were able to get recruits from the people thus brought together. On other occasions these affairs distracted the participants completely, making it useless for the recruiters to approach them. In such cases they had to resign themselves to wait until the revels had spent their force, or make for another stretch of

53 Journal of H.A. Mair, Flirt, 5, 8-9, 13 September 1880; journal of E. Reilly, Oamaru, 25 August 1882; Immigration Agent to Principal Under Secretary, 9 March 1896, QCSO, 3334/1896; Strasburg 1918:509; Cromar 1935:150-1.
coast or another island. 54

In general, however, labour recruiting was stimulated by disturbances in the islands. The labour trade itself, and ever increasing European activity, precipitated further insecurity and prompted many people to recruit. The 1880s was a violent decade in the Solomons in which, for plunder and revenge, the islanders launched many attacks against recruiting and trading vessels. Experience taught the islanders that such attacks could bring swift, if sometimes mis-directed, reprisals. In these years ships of the Royal Navy patrolled the waters of the group and were often quickly on the scene of an attack on a ship or European residents. The retribution exacted by zealous naval captains and outraged labour recruiters could be severe. The people of Uru received a stern lesson after the attack on the Borealis in 1880. When the news of the attack spread, the captains and government agents of other ships then at work around Malaita - the Flirt, the Dauntless and the Stanley - met aboard the last-named vessel to plan reprisals. A combined force from the ships went ashore at Uru and confiscated all trade goods they discovered. The party then burned houses on the small island and destroyed coconut trees.

54 Journal of J.J. Fletcher, Hally Bayley, 4 July 1883; Cromar 1935:342.
canoes, and fishing equipment. In the following year an even harsher punishment was inflicted in the Sandfly passage, in the Florida group, in response to the killing of the crew of the naval vessel Sandfly. Having prevailed upon several influential men in the area to surrender those responsible for the attack, the captain of H.M.S. Cormorant hanged one of the surrendered men from the yard-arm and executed two others by firing squad on shore. He also demonstrated that justice was blind, for it was later learned that the executed men were in no way responsible for the deaths of Lieutenant Bower and his men. In reaction to this and other reprisals - which commonly took the form of private punitive expeditions and shelling of villages - some of the people involved in attacks on Europeans chose to escape possible punishment by taking ship for Queensland or Fiji. This was done, apparently, by some of those involved in the Borealis attack, and it was especially true in the aftermath of the assault on the Young Dick at Sinerango in 1886.

55 Journal of H.A. Mair, Flirt, 17 September 1880; 'Papers relating to murder of a part of the crew of the "Borealis" at Malayta', in CO 225/7.

56 Morton 1883:63.

57 Dale to Erskine, 20 July 1884, RNAS, IV; Hand to Commander-in-Chief, 6 November 1889, ibid, XXIX.

58 Seed to Colonial Secretary, 2 September 1881, FCSO, 1594/1881.
The attack was followed by feasting and a sharing out of plunder which kept the central east coast of Malaita in uproar for days. The next ship to visit the area was the Queensland recruiter Helena. Cromar, her recruiting agent, was encouraged to find that the people around the passage feared the arrival of a man-of-war, and that some were prepared to recruit to avoid punishment. According to his own account, Cromar did nothing to allay these fears; indeed he encouraged them and secured a large number of recruits from the passage. Hard on the heels of the Helena came the Flora, also from Queensland, and Rannie, her government agent, recorded that the vessel secured thirty men. These men were very anxious to depart because, as Rannie later learned, they had been involved in the attack on the Young Dick. The Queensland schooner Archimedes was provided with a large body of recruits in the same way following the murder of traders on Ugi in 1891, and there were probably other instances. As missionaries in the Solomons, particularly Roman Catholics, discovered later when punitive expeditions against offenders were being mounted, the islanders entertained the hope that one set of Europeans would protect

59 Woodford 'Diary', 21-22 May 1886.


61 Griffith to Governor, 23 July 1891, GOV A21.
them from the vengeance of another.\textsuperscript{62}

Among other common motives for recruiting was the hope of being cured of disease. In 1884, when the Winifred was working around the mouth of the Maramasike Passage, the government agent recorded that:

A canoe came off the vessel, and the natives informed us a brother and sister were to come. From what I could understand the reason the woman was sent away was that she was scaly and wanted to be cured, and her friends were on board with her all day.\textsuperscript{63}

The ailments from which people most commonly sought relief were skin disease and genital ulceration, the latter of which may have been due to yaws or venereal disease. It was usually possible to treat the skin disease - a scaliness which was known as 'Solomon Islands' or 'Tokelau ringworm' - successfully. One treatment which was found effective was 'hot baths and sulphur'.\textsuperscript{64} The second complaint was more difficult to treat. One government agent recorded of a venereal patient who had recruited in the hope of being cured that, 'while dressing his sores this evening he made motion as if he wanted to throw himself overboard, seems to give in to much. They

\textsuperscript{62} Laracy 1969b:Ch.4.

\textsuperscript{63} Journal of J.J. Fletcher, \textit{Winifred}, 17 September 1884.

\textsuperscript{64} Journal of J.J. Fletcher, \textit{Hally Bayley}, 20 July 1883; \textit{Age}, 24 February 1894.
all do if they don't get cured in a few days'. Since the standard remedy for ulceration was the application of carbolic acid and 'touching with bluestone', the rate of cure cannot have been high. By the 1880s recruiting in order to receive medical treatment had become so common that government agents were strictly instructed to reject people on the slightest suspicion that they might prove a liability in the colony. Despite this, Fiji's ships, in particular, seem to have recruited a considerable number of invalids. As the ships from the Crown Colony were constantly struggling against Queensland's higher wages and general attractiveness, the recruiters could not afford to be too discriminating about the

65 Journal of E. Reilly, Mavis, 16 June 1883; for other examples of people recruiting in order to receive medical treatment, see Woodford 'Diary', 22 April 1886, Argus, 20 December 1892.
quality of the recruits they secured. Also, in Fiji, very little was asked of recruits in their first six months and the colony could accept men of lower standard, although the government agents did not hesitate to reject hopeless cases of disablement and imbecility.

SOLOMON Islanders who recruited for work abroad were responding to four stimuli: the great desirability

66 See above pp.79-94 also journal of E. Reilly, Oamaru, 24 October 1882, and minute of Agent General of Immigration, 28 September 1889, on FCSO, 4088/1899. Fiji's ships carried a better equipped medical chest than those from Queensland, and the Fiji government agents were required to visit hospital wards in Levuka to learn the rudiments of medicine. It was usually the government agent who treated sick recruits and returns on Queensland ships, but the job was sometimes given to anyone aboard who could claim a certain medical competence. Towards the close of the labour trade, the Samoan recruiter Samoa carried a doctor, but it is unlikely that Samoan ships had done so earlier. On these points, see memo of Chief Medical Officer, 1 May 1879, FCSO, 963/1879; Argus, 5 December 1892; enclosures in Woodford to High Commissioner, 11 January 1908, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 127/1904; enclosures in Woodford to High Commissioner, 27 January 1909, ibid, 584/1908.

67 Journal of F. Nicholls, Dauntless, 31 May 1880; journal of E. Reilly, Oamaru, 21 October 1882; journal of J.J. Fletcher, Winifred, 29 August 1884; and journals of W.R. Bell, Clansman, voyages 1908-09 and 1910, passim.
of European goods; to the novelty of travel; to the example set by others who had returned and seemed to have profited from their experiences in a variety of ways; and to pressures within their own society. Only the actions of those men who were kidnapped in the early 1870s, and the very young men who went at the urging of their relatives in the closing years of the trade, cannot be explained in these ways. Even the latter were probably attracted by the novelty of the venture, although, to judge from the accounts of some of them, their understanding of what was expected of them was slight. In this respect the case of Mamuka of Lao lao, a bush settlement above Olumburi passage, Malaita, was not atypical. In 1908, when he was about sixteen years of age, Mamuka accompanied a group of people from his hamlet, including two of his brothers, down to the anchorage to inspect the Clansman. The bushmen had been alerted to the arrival of the ship when she fired a gun, and, although some of Mamuka's companions intended to volunteer, he said that he went down mostly out of curiosity. Mamuka's brothers engaged and they, with some others who did not, urged him to do the same. He submitted to having his chest measured and his underarm hair inspected, and finally he was pulled into the boat by some of the new recruits.

Mamuka was 'persuaded' to board the Clansman by men who also recruited, but this was not always
the case. Very often a role was played by islanders who did not volunteer themselves, but who had a vested interest in seeing that the recruiters' boats were filled.
CHIEFS AND 'PASSAGE MASTERS'

THE arrival at Levuka of the Kestrel, the first ship to bring Solomon Islanders to Fiji, excited considerable interest; a new source of labour had been tapped, and the 162 recruits carried by the ship was then the largest number ever secured for Fiji on a single voyage. The report on the voyage published in the Fiji Times was unusually full and included the comment, 'The custom of the Solomons seems to be that the King portions his men as he pleases, and he signs the agreement for them, and they sign for themselves afterwards.'¹ Fourteen years later the government agent of the Queensland schooner Ethel, which spent some months working through the Solomons, expressed his dissatisfaction with the way in which recruits were secured in the group. 'Most of the boys obtained in the Solomons...', he wrote, 'are purchased from the different Kings whose names are legion.'² Later still, in 1892, the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Station, interpreting his

¹ Fiji Times, 26 November 1870.
² Journal of C. Mills, Ethel, 4 June 1884, Solicitor General's Office, QSA, 36/3654.
officers' reports on the conduct of labour recruiting, stated:

I believe that in the majority of cases the recruits are passive agents, the active agents being the chiefs of tribes, head men of villages or communities, and some-times the relatives of the recruits themselves.3

The charge that a substantial proportion of the islanders who boarded the labour vessels did so under compulsion from those in authority in their communities was constantly levelled at the labour trade, but, occasionally, Europeans observed the activities of the chiefs objectively. Of Affee-ow, or Sam, of Leili island - off the east coast of Malaita - Commander Goodrich wrote in 1894, '... there is no doubt he sees his interests now lie with the white man, like all the salt-water chiefs round Malaita who practically make their living by trade got from the labour vessels in exchange for assistance given in recruiting'.4 There were coastal chiefs of this persuasion on all islands frequented

3 Commander-in-Chief to Governor of Queensland, 16 March 1892, RNAS, V.

4 Goodrich to Commander-in-Chief, 29 August 1894, RNAS. This letter is printed in a report on naval investigations of disturbances in the Solomon Islands in 1893; it appears that the series of which it is a part, 'Solomon Islands, 1893-96', is not included in the RNAS records in the National Archives, Wellington.
by the labour ships. Recruiters were assisted by Sogo of Thousand Ships Bay, Ysabel; Sambui, a chief in the Logu district on the west coast of Guadalcanal, and by a number of chiefs on San Cristobal. The list of Malaitan chiefs whose aid was enlisted by recruiters is a long one. Dahe, and Raha, or 'Big Joe', both chiefs of areas around the Maramasike Passage, guided the Queensland and Fiji recruiters to the strongholds of the bushmen which lay up the rivers and creeks which ran into the passage. Raha, in particular, was considered a useful ally and had a long career; the first recorded mention of him as a recruiting assistant is in 1881, and he was still in favour with the recruiters in 1896. Muldo and Eriga of Ataa Cove made their services available to recruiters, as did 'Billy Bina' of Bina island in Alite Bay, and Goreally of Kwai island off

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6 Journal of F. Nicholls, Dauntless, 24 May 1880; Journal of J. Gaggin, Jessie Kelly, 7-8 August 1881; 'Useful Natives in the Solomon Group', list compiled by Captain E.H.M. Davis dated 1 January 1891, RNAS, XLIV; Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, CO 225/50. The names of other co-operative chiefs such as Ramo, chief of a village on Elizabeth Island off Malaita, who was 'commonly called "Jim" by labour vessels', have survived but nothing is known of their activities. See Brooke to Tryon, 7 May 1886, RNAS, XXIII.
the east coast of Malaita. Doubtless there were others whose names do not survive in the written records; the assistance of unnamed chiefs of the Maramasike Passage and Coleridge Bay is mentioned in some accounts of recruiting voyages, and old men on Malaita recall two such men, Tafetemau of Sinerango, and Wate of Port Adam. Those who were most energetic and successful in their co-operation with recruiters were known by the very appropriate name of 'passage masters'. The favour and assistance of three men in particular, Kwaisulia of Ada Gege, an artificial island in the Lau lagoon, Foulanger of Walande, a small island off the east coast of South Malaita, and Mahooalla, or 'Billy Langalanga', of Mgwai Fou in the Langalanga lagoon, were much sought after by the recruiters.

7 Rason to Commander-in-Chief, 19 September 1895, QCSO, 13398/1895; journal of F. Otway, Sydney Belle, 28 October 1895; Sydney Daily Telegraph, 23 August 1899; Woodford to im Thurn, 22 August 1908, CO 225/82.


9 As old residents recall, this term was commonly used by recruiters in the Solomons after 1911 when recruiting for work outside the group had ceased. It was almost certainly used earlier but only one instance of it has been found, this is with reference to Muldo of Ataa Cove, Argus, 12 December 1892.
The evidence presented in the previous chapter acts against the supposition that the chiefs and passage masters compelled people to recruit. The attractiveness of the travel and rewards the labour recruiters offered, and the circumstances of young men in the island communities, account sufficiently for the decision of the majority of those who entered the recruiting boats. One of the reasons why chiefs and others were charged with coercion is clear; all recruiting was accompanied by a distribution of goods, not to the recruit himself, but to others who remained on the beach or in their canoes. Many Europeans who observed this saw in it the hallmarks of that slave-trading which had been the moral issue of their generation and to which they automatically responded with antipathy. Comparisons with slave-trading, however, were inapt. Chiefs did not place people under restraint and deliver them bodily to the boats. Informants deny that this was done, and it would not, in any case, have been possible, for even the most tolerant of government agents could not have countenanced it.

There is no evidence that enemies were taken prisoner with a view to being disposed of to labour recruiters. Even the most bitter opponents of the labour trade, as it was conducted in the Solomons, did not argue that this was a general occurrence. Indeed the existing evidence points in
the other direction - people held in captivity escaped to the recruiting ships in defiance of their captors.\textsuperscript{10} The only recorded example of people being abducted and delivered to the recruiting boats is that in which Gwaliasi of Sulu Fou and Kwaisulia forced some bushmen into the William Manson's boats in 1894. The circumstances surrounding this incident were atypical: unusual inducements were held out to Kwaisulia by Vos, the master of the ship, who had an uncommonly large financial interest in the voyage himself.\textsuperscript{11} It is likely, however, that the chiefs and passage masters sometimes intimidated men into migrating. They may also have forced to recruit - as a means of discharging the debt - people who were under obligation to them. According to Ivens, Kwaisulia deputed his bravos to terrorize men into recruiting, but no specific instances are given.\textsuperscript{12} This is unlikely to have been done often, for informants were adamant that the passage masters did not use such methods. People on Ada Gege - including a son and grandson of Kwaisulia - denied that he forced men to go to Queensland and Fiji; since they are intensely proud of his renown, they

\textsuperscript{10} See above p. 124.

\textsuperscript{11} See Brisbane Courier, 12-14, 19, 21, 23, 26 March 1895; Ivens 1932:264-5; Stevens 1950:401; Scarr 1967a:18.

\textsuperscript{12} Ivens 1930:264-5.
would not hesitate to credit him with the power to have done so if it were true. Rather than leaving behind them a reputation as 'enforcers', the passage masters are remembered principally for the rapport they enjoyed with Europeans at a time when such a thing was rare.

W.T. Wawn, who sailed as a master of labour ships for fifteen years, branded Kwaisulia and Foulanger as 'simply crimps who sell recruits to the highest bidder'. This was a hasty and prejudiced judgement for, as Scarr points out, Wawn was intolerant of the brashness of the passage masters. He believed that they had been 'spoiled' by other recruiters who indulged their every whim in order to win their favour. \(^{13}\) Three of the most conscientious government agents, Douglas Rannie, who served the Queensland government, and Franc Otway and W.R. Bell, officers aboard Fiji ships, were acquainted with Kwaisulia and other co-operative chiefs around Malaita, and did not accuse them of 'crimping'. \(^{14}\) Nor did other witnesses of their activities who carried no brief for the labour trade. The *Argus* correspondent who shipped incognito aboard

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the *Helena* in 1892 was chagrined to find no grounds for criticism of the manner in which recruiting was conducted. He had seen services rendered by Muldo, Kwaisulia and Ou - Foulanger's son and successor at Walande - but, although watchful for it, he could detect no signs of compulsion from those on shore or on ship.15 Similarly Woodford, who was, after his appointment to the Solomons, a severe critic of some aspects of the labour trade, levelled no charges against the passage masters although he was acquainted with Kwaisulia and was kept well informed about his activities.

Such was the willingness of young Solomon Islanders to recruit for work abroad that it was unnecessary for the chiefs to do more than add their blandishments to the attractions of recruiting which were well established. This was certainly the technique of Kwaisulia who, according to Ada Gege informants, used to promise people who recruited under his auspices that his good relations with the Europeans assured them of safety and fair treatment. The story is told at Ada Gege that one of Kwaisulia's kinsmen killed another islander in Queensland in a dispute over a woman and was sentenced to be hanged.

15 See 'The Kanaka Labour Traffic, Special Investigation by "The Argus" A Representative on a Recruiting Schooner', articles published in the *Argus* between 3 and 22 December 1892.
According to the local tradition Kwaisulia, hearing of this from labour recruiters, made representation to the Queensland government and secured the pardon of his 'subject'. The story has proved impossible to check and is almost certainly not true, but its currency indicates something of the prestige Kwaisulia enjoyed among the people of the Lau lagoon.

The practical services rendered to the recruiters by the passage masters were many. They were able, in the first place, to guarantee the safety of the ship at anchor and the boats as they worked their way along the coast, up the creeks and rivers, and around the artificial islands. Foulanger, Kwaisulia and Mahooalla personally accompanied the recruiting boats, acting, on most occasions, as interpreters and persuaders. They also arranged for word to be sent to the bush people of the arrival of recruiting vessels; this was apparently a speciality of Foulanger who was termed by Wawn a 'well known runner' for this reason. Kwaisulia and Mahooalla were, at different times, entrusted with delivering messages from one ship to another about the prospects for recruiting in the area, and with relaying the news of attacks on ships. These two, and Raha also, were useful to naval officers investigating the

frequently occurring acts of violence around the Malaita coast. They acted as guides and interpreters on such occasions. In these ways the passage masters were drawn into close and continued contact with the agents of European enterprise and authority, and they enhanced their personal prestige thereby.

Despite the genuine assistance the chiefs and passage masters afforded the recruiters, there were limitations to their effectiveness. At times some of them were considered to be 'played out', and recruiters expressed disappointment with them. Wawn said this, at different times, of Foulanger, 'Sam' of Aio, and Mahooalla when their relations with the bush people, which had previously been good and

17 Raha and Mahooalla were contacted by Gibson, captain of H.M.S. Curacoa, in 1893 when the islanders were being informed by this officer of the declaration of the British protectorate. Raha was entrusted with a copy of the official proclamation; Mahooalla at first agreed to allow the British flag to be planted on his island but he later, unaccountably, changed his mind. See Gibson to Commander-in-Chief, 10 August 1893, enclosed in Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief, 7 March 1894, RNAS, XXIII. See also Hand to Commander-in-Chief 12 July 1891, ibid, and, with reference to the chiefs acting as messengers between recruiting vessels, Statement of W.T. Wawn, 27 December 1888, enclosed in Woodford to Under Colonial Secretary, 2 January 1889, ibid. Wawn's statement was made in connection with the killing at Manaoba in 1888 of Armstrong, government agent of his ship the Ariel. See also Cromar 1935:215.
the foundation of their usefulness, were strained or hostile. When this was the case, the 'runners', chiefs or passage masters were unable to attract recruits to the boats.\textsuperscript{18} This indicates that these co-operative men did not provide a blind behind which kidnapping could be carried on, but rather that they contrived to interpose themselves between the recruiters and islanders who were already interested in recruiting. By so doing they succeeded in getting a large share of the trade goods which changed hands every time a man was signed on, and they often shared disproportionately in the goods brought back by returns - Kwaisulia, for one\textsuperscript{19} made a practice of taxing bush returns, and on one occasion at least he held a couple of them to outright ransom.

The rewards the passage masters received for their services were considerable. A vast stream of European goods poured into 'Urassie' or 'Urasl as Kwaisulia's stronghold was variously called: rifles and ammunition, tobacco by the case, barbed-wire, knives, axes, mirrors and cloth - the last four items being stock in trade of the recruiters. Recruiting ships brought dogs and even more exotic things such as a ship's boat, clocks, music boxes,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Wawn 'Private Logs...', 2 September 1888, 24 March, 16 July 1894.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Woodford to Fitzmaurice, 11 August 1906, RNAS, Northern Division Box, enclosure 23.
\end{itemize}
and at least one impressive piece of furniture - the chest of drawers landed by the boats of Fiji's Sydney Belle because it was too large to be taken ashore by canoe. 20

Ships' boats were particularly prized possessions; Affee-ow of Leili was given one by Wawn in 1894, and it appears that Sogo of Ysabel acquired one also. 21 Handsome fees were paid in trade goods. In 1888 the recruiters aboard the Ariel paid Foulanger and Ou, who had both assisted as interpreters and backed the recruiters with the former's prestige, five pounds of tobacco, a dozen pipes, some boxes of matches, and eight pounds of rice. This was earned for two days' work which had not been particularly successful; only five recruits were secured. Mahooalla was engaged for a month and a half as interpreter and pilot on the same voyage and was amply rewarded; he was paid tobacco to the value of £2.10.0. per month - five times the rate of wages for labourers in Queensland and ten times more than was paid in Fiji. 22


21 Wawn 'Private Logs...', 15 July 1894; Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, CO 225/50; Sydney Daily Telegraph, 23 August 1899.

22 Wawn 'Private Logs...', 7 September, 16 October 1888; Wawn 1893:414.
The passage masters were men of rank and authority within their communities. This was true, according to those who remember them, of Tafetemau and Wate, and there is documentary evidence of the standing of the others. In 1895, Sogo was able to mount an expedition to Tulagi of twenty-two canoes and about 400 men and women. Foulanger was the chief of Walande, and Mahooalla belonged to one of the chiefly lines among the people of the Langalanga lagoon; he eventually became the chief of Mgawai Fou, one of the main artificial islands in the lagoon. Kwaisulia's origins were a little more humble: his connections with the chiefly family of Sulu Fou were on the female side and were not, therefore, transmissible to him. He became, however, a ramo, a status within the Lau social system which was accorded to the supreme fighting man and champion of the island. The ramo was charged with the duty of ensuring that injuries to the island's people and property did not go unpunished. Although over the years which his career spanned there were legitimate chiefs installed on Ada Gege and Sulu Fou, Kwaisulia

23 Wawn 'Private Logs...', 15 October, 2 September 1888; Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, CO 225/50; Cromar 1935:299.
eclipsed them all in wealth and authority. 24

Another attribute which the most renowned passage masters had in common was the geographical extent of their influence. Using the weapons he acquired from the labour recruiters in the early 1880s, Kwaisulia was able to 'supress some Lau clans' and to make his influence felt throughout the Lau lagoon from Ataa to Manaoba. He waged war against the Maoaobans on several occasions and once totally subdued the island of Fuana Fou and installed his nephew Kaa as chief. At the height of his power his strength was felt as far south as the Kwaio district, for his depredations at one time forced half the population of Uru Island to seek refuge on Kwai Island. 25 The wide area over which his writ ran was demonstrated in 1902 when he deputed his son, who was known by the nickname 'Kaiviti', to arrest two murderers who were hiding in the bush some miles south of Ataa. This Kaiviti duly did and


25 Wawn 'Private Logs...', 6 December 1888, 19 July 1894; Rannie 1912:184-5. Information from Dr Pierre Miranda who completed two years of field research in the Lau lagoon in 1968, and personal correspondence, 29 October 1968.
Mahaffy, assistant to Woodford, who had hitherto tried in vain to take these offenders, commented:

It is quite plain that Quisulia is able to keep order in this district and I impressed upon him that he would in future be held responsible for the peace of this part of Mala. There is probably no other chief in the island who could send nine or ten miles down the coast and effect without any disturbance, the arrest of two malefactors who do not belong to his tribe or sept.²⁶

The influence of Foulanger and Mahooalla was not so impressive, but, as with Kwaisulia, it was wide-ranging. Foulanger had influence around the shores of Port Adam, and his word was said to have carried weight up the east coast of Malaita as far as Ataa. Walande, where Foulanger's authority was paramount, was colonized by people who had moved south from the Lau lagoon - contacts were maintained between the two areas and Foulanger's influence in the north was probably due to this traditional connection. Mahooalla, similarly, was a man of prestige and renown over a wide area - in his case throughout the Langalanga lagoon and down the west coast to the Maramasike Passage. He was particularly well equipped for his role as an assistant to the

²⁶ Mahaffy to Woodford, 1 October 1902, enclosed in Woodford to Jackson, 1 December 1902, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 7/1903.
recruiters by virtue of his unusual command of the languages spoken on Malaita. 27

Nor were status and influence the only common characteristics of the passage masters. Most of them - Foulanger was a notable exception - were themselves returned labourers. Kwaisulia was recruited in 1875 by Queensland's Bobtail Nag on either her first or second voyage to the Lau lagoon in that year. 28 He worked in Queensland for six years, probably in the Rockhampton district. 29 Dahe, Raha, Muldo and Mahooalla also had overseas experience. Dahe and Raha worked in Fiji for three years. Muldo and Mahooalla went to Queensland; the latter went twice


28 Ivens contradicts himself on this point. In his first book on the Solomons, 1927:23-4, he said that Kwaisulia was recruited by the Bobtail Nag on her second visit to the Lau lagoon, when John Renton returned to give presents to Kabough of Sulu Fou, the chief who had sheltered him, and to act as an interpreter in recruiting. In a later book, however, 1930:64, he wrote that Kwaisulia was recruited on the occasion of Renton's rescue. Ada Gege informants insist that the second account is true. They also maintain that Kwaisulia spent six years in Queensland which is confirmed by a note entitled 'Note re Quisulia late chief of Attagege accidentally killed at Basakana while shooting fish with dynamite in 1909', among the Woodford papers.

to the colony for three year periods. 30 Their experiences as migrant labourers equipped them with a command of pidgin English - for which Kwaisulia and Mahooalla in particular were renowned 31 - and helped them to be at their ease with Europeans. Although Foulanger had not worked abroad himself, his son, Ou, was much travelled. Ou was taken from Walande by force to a plantation in the New Hebrides. He eventually contrived to make his way back to Malaita via a Queensland recruiting ship and a British naval vessel. 32 Ou could read and write a little, he was confident in the company of Europeans, and an able lieutenant for Foulanger in dealing with the colonial recruiters.

Kwaisulia's son Kaiviti had, as his nickname suggests, worked in Fiji, and his nephew, 'Jackson' Kaa had been to Queensland and worked for

30 Brisbane Courier, 19 March 1895.

31 Journal of F. Nicholls, Dauntless, 24 May 1880; Journal of J. Gaggins, Jessie Kelly, 7 August 1881; Wawn 'Private Logs...', 15 October 1888; Wyley to Senior Officer, New Guinea, 2 August 1889, RNAS, XXIII; Argus, 12 December 1892; Sydney Daily Telegraph, 23 August 1899.

32 Argus, 9 December 1892; Sydney Daily Telegraph, 23 August 1899.
a time as boat's crew in a Fiji recruiting ship. 33
Like Ou, Kaiviti and Kaa were unusual men in their
time for they were semi-literate and, after the death
of their sponsor, they were able themselves to continue
successfully as men of affairs in the avenues open
to them. 34

33 See statement of 'Ka, or Jackson, native of Suluvou'
22 August 1889, enclosed in Thurston to Senior
Naval Officer, 12 November 1889, XXIII. Kaa's
statement was made in connection with hostilities
between Kwaisulia and the people of Manaoba. At
this time Kaa claimed that Kwaisulia had authorized
him to request that his stronghold be annexed to
Fiji. See also Scarr 1967b:253. With reference
to Kaiviti's experiences abroad see journal of

34 Ou became chief of Walande after Foulanger's death
and continued to assist recruiters. He was described
in 1899 as a 'good looking and intellectual young
Kaiviti and Kaa helped those recruiting for
plantations in the Solomons after Kwaisulia's death
in 1909. They assisted authorities in
investigations of crimes in north-east Malaita,
and, unlike Kwaisulia who remained a staunch
opponent of Christian missionaries, Kaiviti and Kaa
became supporters of the South Sea Evangelical
amongst the Kanakas in Queensland*, 1904-5:6-7, 10;
*Queenslander*, 12 January 1907; Caulfield to Deputy
Commissioner, British Solomon Islands, 22 May 1909,
enclosed in Barnett to Acting High Commissioner, 29
June 1909, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 784/
1909. On Kwaisulia's opposition to Christian mission
due, it seems, to his fear that native teachers might
come to have more authority than he, see *Brisbane
Courier*, 14 March 1895; *Southern Cross Log*, cxix,
The passage masters, then, were in the highly advantageous position of having a secure power base in their own society and a developed understanding of the ways and requirements of Europeans. Although direct evidence on the point is lacking, it seems likely that they used the goods they acquired from the recruiters to consolidate their power by distributing them in such a way as to obligate others to them and acquire an indebted and loyal body of supporters. Foulanger was said to have had a strong bodyguard constantly in attendance, and Kwaisulia likewise built up a formidable personal following. 35

THE passage masters of the Solomons were an unusual but not unique Melanesian phenomenon. They find their parallel, for example, in New Caledonia, in Bwaxat, the powerful chief of the Hiéghene district on the east coast of the island. Bwaxat, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, lent his support to English sandalwood traders and, like the passage masters, was rewarded with arms and ammunition and trade goods. 36 In their ambition, acquisitiveness, and readiness to capitalize on new opportunities, these enterprising coastal chiefs were acting similarly.

35 Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 292/1896; Hopkins 1928: 154-5; Cromar 1935:264, 299.

to the 'big-men' of the bush. However, they differed from the 'big-men', and were able to achieve greater and more lasting influence, by holding formal rank, usually hereditary, within their communities.

As far as the recruiters were concerned, the presence of these well-known men or their lieutenants in the boats probably made their work safer and easier. Safer, because if any harm befell the passage masters those responsible would have local enemies to contend with as well as a man-of-war if Europeans in the party were injured. Easier, because the influential men probably decided some waverers in favour of volunteering, and their presence probably was decisive in securing the consent of relations and friends. A final assessment of the role of the chiefs and passage masters then might be that, although very useful to successful recruiting, they were not indispensable to it. It was their considerable achievement that they were often able to represent themselves to recruiters and others as being just that.

37 See above pp.30-1.
SOLOMON ISLANDERS ABROAD

THROUGHOUT the second half of the nineteenth century Melanesian labour was in demand in New Caledonia, Samoa, Fiji and Queensland. Most of the islanders who recruited for New Caledonia worked on plantations, but, from the 1880s on, many laboured in the colony's nickel and sulphur mines. It was the Solomon Islanders' good fortune that the recruiting ships which sailed from Nouméa concentrated upon the New Hebrides and seldom ventured as far north as the Solomons, for the hazards to health of work in the mines were great. Death rates among indentured labourers in New Caledonia seem always to have been higher than in other places. In 1881 the Effie Meikle recruited fifty-six men from Tapua in the Santa Cruz group for the French colony, and seven years later only seven of these had returned home. The Directeur de l'Intérieur reported that, of the other forty-six men, twenty had re-engaged, four had gone to Australia (probably as crew aboard an island trading vessel) and twenty-two had died.¹ In 1891 the murder at Makira Bay, San Cristobal, of a man named Craig, an employee of the Solomon Islands

¹ Gauharou to Layard, 12 September 1888, RNAS, XXXVIII.
trader Thomas Woodhouse, was attributed to the disaffection of one 'Tom', who had been to Nouméa as one of a party of twenty recruits of whom seven had died. High death rates, and the fact that the places of work in New Caledonia were 'up country', made the colony unpopular. The men who said that they found there'...plenty work, small fellow pay', were expressing the general experience.  

Samoa was a more attractive place in which to work, but there were drawbacks. The indentured labourers were employed mainly on the coconut plantations of Godeffroy und Sohn (later the Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft), although some time-expired men worked in Apia. Housing and rationing on these estates seem to have been satisfactory, but life on the plantations of the German firm was highly regimented; gambling, for example, was forbidden on the grounds that it provoked quarrels. Perhaps more strongly than their counterparts in Fiji and Queensland, the German overseers assumed that indentured labourers had contracted to work to their employers' satisfaction, and that if they failed to do so they must be 'driven'. Absconding from the plantations

2 Extract from the log of the 'Sandfly'..., enclosed in Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 29 August 1891, ibid.

as a result of the overseers' harshness was common, and the penalties for disobedience and misconduct were more severe in Samoa than elsewhere.\textsuperscript{4} For small offences the usual punishments were withholding of the tobacco allowance, the imposition of extra task work, or a few days' confinement. For more serious infringements, particularly those involving violence, the German consul could sanction the use of the lash, and the offending islander's term of service could be extended. The lash used was a 'cat', similar to that employed aboard German naval vessels, and up to forty-eight 'stripes' could be given.\textsuperscript{5}

Mortality rates on the Samoan plantations were high, averaging about 11% according to one account. The monotony of the plantation régime was not relieved by the pleasures of the towns as it was in Queensland, nor, as in Fiji, by fraternization with the indigenous people, who in Samoa at once feared the 'black boys' and held them in contempt.

\textsuperscript{4} German Administration Papers, series 17b, Samoan Affairs, Vol. 2, National Archives, Wellington (translations and notes from these papers by R.P. Gilson in Department of Pacific History, ANU); Stevenson 1892:23, 30-3; Drost 1934:71; Tippett 1956:25-7; Gray 1960:130.

\textsuperscript{5} Swanston to High Commissioner, 23 January 1879, enclosed in Gorrie to C.O., 1 April 1879, CO 225/2; Drost 1934:67; Tippett 1956:31.
The Melanesians' most common complaint, however, was that their terms of service were extended against their will; in one case some Solomon Islanders were 'threatened' by their employers when they complained to the British consul that their requests to be repatriated had been refused.\(^6\)

THE nature of the experience of recruits to Fiji and Queensland depended upon the time at which they went and the kind of work to which they were assigned. Happily for them, the majority of Solomon Islanders who went to Queensland and the Crown Colony did so after 1890, when the conditions under which indentured labourers worked were much improved from those that had obtained earlier. Nevertheless, considerable numbers of people from the group went in the twenty years before this when the lot of indentured labourers was harder.

In the early 1870s most of the Melanesians in Fiji were employed by cotton growers, and, from the late years of that decade on sugar estates: living conditions on these large plantations

\(^{6}\) Cusack Smith to Rose, 9 July 1896, enclosed in Cusack Smith to Thurston, 9 July 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 236/1896; Cusack Smith to Thurston, 16 August 1896, ibid, 299/1896; Rose to Cusack Smith, 16 July 1896, enclosed in Cusack Smith to Thurston, 18 August 1896, ibid, 322/1896; Tippett 1956:31; Gray 1960:56.
were poor. In 1878 the government agent of the Fijian recruiting vessel _Marion Rennie_ reported that opinion was divided among the people in the islands about the treatment which could be expected on the plantations in Fiji; in some places returned labourers were dissatisfied with it and were deterring others from recruiting for the colony. Many overseers, unfamiliar with Melanesians, failed to discriminate between idleness and sickness, and made their labourers work when they were unfit to do so. The cotton planters in particular were struggling against adverse economic conditions in the early 1870s and, while they earned the sympathy of fellow Europeans for coping with 'a horde of utterly untutored savages from a dozen different groups...alike only in their total ignorance of the work required of them', it is clear that their employees were expected to learn fast and work hard.

The high death rates on the sugar estates brought warnings from the government in 1879. In that year an inspection of plantations revealed that the labourers were being driven too hard, that their diet was deficient in the foods to which they were accustomed, that mosquito nets, where they were

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8 Cuming 1885:59, see also Horne 1881:185.
provided, were of a very low standard, and that plantations' medical supplies were generally inadequate. The Immigration Department was severely understaffed in inspectors - those who were assigned this task were described as 'young men with little experience, ill salaried and with too much to do' - and the regulations with regard to living conditions and ration scales were not observed by employers. The Melanesians suffered accordingly. A medical inspection in 1882 drew attention to the shortcomings in accommodation and diet which were general on the sugar plantations. The inspecting doctor found on some plantations that the labourers' houses were planted closely round with sugar cane or some other crop, and that the occupants urinated and defecated into this growth immediately outside their doors. The house sites were ill-drained, the floors were not raised, and the iron roofs made conditions inside oppressive. Too much sweet potato of an inferior kind was included in the diet and, on many plantations, the drinking water was putrid. Mosquitoes abounded in these conditions and the labourers were not sufficiently protected against them:

9 Seed to Colonial Secretary, 18 October 1879, FCSO, 1745/79; Wilkins 1953:99.
10 Lucas n.d.:70-1.
In most cases the mosquito nets were highly objectionable, incapable of excluding mosquitoes in the majority of cases; but, in one instance, made of thick calico, and therefore too hot and close.\(^{11}\)

Inspection of the CSR Company's plantations in the Rewa district revealed conditions at their worst. Mortality rates were extremely high; the Acting Agent General of Immigration reported that,

Out of some 587 Polynesian Immigrants indentured mostly within the last six months of the year 1881 to estates belonging to the Colonial Sugar Company some 220 and odd have died up to date.\(^{12}\)

The majority of these people were New Hebrideans, mostly from Santo and Malekula, but 117 Solomon Islanders were among them. Sixty Malaitans, forty-seven from San Cristobal, and nine from Guadalcanal had been brought to the colony between August 1881 and January 1882 by the Au Revoir, Isabella, and Windward Ho. The mortality rate among these Solomon Islanders was higher than the overall rate of 37%: seventy-three Solomon Islanders - more than 62% of the total number - were dead by September 1882.\(^{13}\)

These death rates cried out for explanation; the labourers were all from islands at which recruiting

\(^{11}\) *Fiji Times*, 3 March 1883.

\(^{12}\) Anson to Colonial Secretary, 14 September 1882, FCSO, 2185/1882.

\(^{13}\) 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'.
had been carried on for many years, and there was no reason to suspect, as there was with Polynesians and men brought from New Guinea in 1883-4, that they were congenitally unfit for work in the colony. The Immigration Department refused to permit the CSR Company to take labourers until its plantations were further developed. When the Company was later permitted to employ islanders, too much was still demanded of them in the arduous work of clearing the land and building the mills, and too little attention was paid to their care and comfort. The Rewa district, anyway, was humid and unhealthy, and this disadvantage was compounded by the attitude of the overseers who drove the labourers hard, even when they were ill, and sent them back to work too soon after recovering from illness. As a result of this treatment the physical condition of many of the Melanesians was bad. 'I do not think that I saw any domestic animal in England working in as emaciated a condition as that/which I discovered these two Polynesian immigrants', wrote an official about two labourers on the CSR Company's Nausori plantation. As well as physically ill-treating them, the overseers offended the sensibilities of the islanders by forcing them to occupy houses in which deaths had recently
It was thought by some observers that the 'docility' of the Melanesians contributed to their woes. In 1883 the average death rate among Melanesians on Rewa plantations was about 200 per thousand as against 40-50 per thousand for Indian labourers. Commenting on this, Dr W. MacGregor, the colony's Chief Medical Officer, believed that dysentery was the main cause. He was also of the opinion that the refusal of the Indians to work in bad weather and their insistence upon getting the stipulated rations - matters in which the islanders were acquiescent - contributed to the better health of the former.  

This 'docility' may itself have been in part induced by a poor diet and a low state of health among the islanders in the Rewa district, for Melanesians were not thought docile elsewhere. Malaitans, in particular, were found to be recalcitrant, and it is probable that the overseers tried to curb islanders' 

14 Anson to Colonial Secretary, 14 September 1882, FCSO, 2185/1882; Murray to Anson, 23 October 1882, ibid, 2455/1882; 'Correspondence relating to the Native population of Fiji', GBPP, LVIII, 1887:5-6.

15 'Report of a Commission appointed to inquire into the working of the Western Pacific Orders in Council...', GBPP, LV, 1884:35.

16 Alexander 1927:261.
spirits by driving them hard: ill-treatment and over-work could produce a high casualty rate as effectively as poor diet and unhealthy surroundings. By 1887 the Agent General of Immigration had come to regard the unsuitability of Melanesian labour for sugar cultivation as an established fact for which no single reason was apparent. He wrote:

It must not be supposed that the upturning of new soil or the cultivation of alluvial plain are the sole conditions rendering Sugar Cane cultivation unsuitable for the employment of Polynesian Immigrants. Cane plantations that have been cultivated for years and are situated in healthy, dry Districts are subject to very heavy annual rates of mortality...showing the influence of aggregation and cane cultivation upon the health of the indentured population....

The high death rates on sugar plantations made necessary, and the increase in Indian labour migration permitted, a phasing out of Melanesians from the sugar industry in Fiji. The overseers found Indians more suited to the work, while those in charge of copra plantations expressed satisfaction with the Melanesians, whom they found 'docile' when employed in small numbers on isolated properties.  

17 Anson to Colonial Secretary, 30 November 1887, FCSO, 3849/1887.

health of its 'Polynesian' labourers and employed very few of them and those on light tasks only. By 1891 there were only four estates - Koronivia, Uluicala, Mago and Holmhurst - on which more than thirty Melanesians were employed. The remainder were on coconut plantations, in domestic service, in stores and on farms, and the mortality rate among the 2,458 Melanesians in the colony was 2.93%. In 1897 the mortality rate had fallen to 1.98% and it was reported that: 'The mortality rate among immigrants under original indenture, now considerably less than that of other immigrants, is a reversal of previous conditions which speaks favourably for the improvement in conditions of indentured immigrants on the smaller plantations, on which they are mainly employed.'

In Queensland also there were changing patterns in the employment of Melanesians, both in the kinds of work which most of them did, and in the size of the properties upon which they were employed. In Queensland, as in Fiji, progressively more islanders were found on small holdings, although large plantations continued to employ a sizeable percentage. The situations in the two colonies were reversed, however,

19 'Extracts from Reports of E.W. Knox relating to Fiji in the 1880s', report for 1886, CSRCA, F/1/0/22.

in that, far from being phased out as in Fiji, Pacific island labour was increasingly relied upon by the growers of sugar in Queensland. Throughout most of the 1870s Pacific islanders were employed in about equal numbers on sheep stations and sugar plantations. The Solomon Island recruits on board the Bobtail Nag who were landed at Rockhampton in 1875, for example, worked in that district's pastoral industry, but most of the ships which worked in the Solomons in the 1870s landed their recruits at Mackay and Maryborough where they would certainly have worked on sugar plantations. 21

In 1877 the Queensland government issued regulations which provided that Pacific islanders were to be used only in tropical and sub-tropical agriculture. These were set aside by a new administration in the following year, but in 1884 it became law that all islanders were confined to tropical and sub-tropical agriculture except those who had been in the colony continuously for five years before the passing of the act. 22 This ruling quickly had its effect; the 1881 census revealed that 5,075 of the 6,348 islanders in the colony were agricultural labourers. Most of these were concentrated in the Maryborough and Mackay districts and were, therefore, employed in sugar

21 See 'Register of the arrival of vessels...'.

cultivation. They were mostly at work on large plantations. This was demonstrated by an inspection in 1878 of thirty-four plantations around Mackay. On seventeen properties on which thirty or fewer islanders were employed, 167 were under indenture; on the other seventeen properties in the district, on which more than thirty were at work, the total was 1,197. An inspection made in 1880 showed that this pattern had intensified in two years; by then more islanders were being employed in the district and, on thirteen plantations which employed more than thirty Melanesians and which were inspected on both occasions, the number employed had risen from 1,045 in 1878 to 1,315. The increasing tendency for islanders to be employed on large estates was true in the other sugar districts also. On 31 December 1879 in the Maryborough, Tiaro, and Wide Bay districts, 970 Melanesians/employed on eight plantations which carried thirty or more, while the remaining 370 islanders in these areas were employed on seventy-two other holdings. In the Bundaberg area most of the Pacific islanders were employed upon


24 Horrocks to Colonial Secretary, 13 August 1878, QCSO, 3746/1878.

large plantations and at the juice mills, while the small-scale sugar grower typically had two or three men under indenture. 26

The 1880s were the hey-day of the large plantation in Queensland. Because mills were highly mechanized and steam ploughs were necessary to break up the virgin loam, large amounts of capital were required to produce sugar cheaply and in sufficient quantity. The CSR Company established its mammoth Victoria plantation and mill in 1881-3, and other large operations to which many thousands of Melanesians were to be indentured over the next twenty years were begun around the same time, such as the Kalamia mill at Ayr in 1882, Fairymead plantation and mill at Bundaberg in 1882, and Bingera mill and plantation in the same district in 1883. 27

As in Fiji, although to a less marked extent, the conditions under which indentured labourers worked in Queensland were better on small sugar cane farms than on plantations. This was the view of Charles Horrocks, the inspector of Pacific

26 'Report, with details of inspection of the board appointed to ascertain, if possible, the cause of the excessive mortality amongst the South Sea Islanders on the sugar plantations owned by R. Cran & Co., Maryborough', QVP, II, 1881:11; Turner 1955:20.

islanders for the Mackay and Maryborough districts who, in 1880, felt particular concern about the diet of the labourers. 'On the small farms', he wrote, 'where the Islanders obtain much the same food as their Masters, and where they are not kept to the same scale, they always appeared in better condition and spirits than on the large plantations where they are fed by contract.'

His inspection of the Mackay sugar farms and plantations in 1878 provided the basis for this opinion. On that occasion Horrocks commented in his report on diet, accommodation and treatment generally, and it is possible to classify his judgements - balancing favourable observations on some of these aspects against unfavourable ones on others - into 'good', 'fair', and 'bad' assessments of each place of employment. Using this rough measure, six of the plantations could be rated as 'good', six as 'fair', and four as 'bad'. The farms fared better - eleven of them were 'good', two were 'fair', and four were 'bad'.

The hazards to which islanders could be exposed on the plantations at this time were revealed by a medical inspection in 1880 of the Maryborough estates of Robert Cran and Company. The investigation was prompted by reports of heavy death rates among

28 Horrocks to Colonial Secretary, 17 May 1880, QCSO, 5861/1880.

29 Horrocks to Colonial Secretary, 13 August 1878, ibid, 3746/1878.
the Melanesians on these plantations. The two doctors who conducted the inspection found that, whereas the general death rate amongst Pacific islanders in the Maryborough district was high enough at seventy-nine per thousand, the rate on the Cran plantations for the five years prior to 31 March 1880 was ninety-two per thousand. In 1879 the death rate was 107 per thousand. There were more than 300 islanders experiencing the hazardous conditions on the Cran estates, and some of them - the recruits who arrived in the Sybil on 20 February 1879 and in the Ceara on 16 June 1879, for example - were Solomon Islanders. The doctors considered the islanders' ten-hour day too long and 'certainly excessive for these new recruits who have but lately left an existence of savage idleness'. Facilities for the care of the sick were non-existent or at best unsatisfactory. Most living quarters provided for the islanders were without latrines, and visits by a qualified doctor were rare.

The sick or the dying, in no matter what weather, have to expose themselves, and manage as best they can, and so they prefer their own places; and there in a hut whose roof was perhaps less than five (5) feet from the ground, they would be found coiled up within a few inches of a smouldering fire, and actually found, for in many circumstances the fact of their being sick was only made known to the manager or overseer when he discovered them as he accompanied us on our inspection.

The doctors' final remarks were damning:
We are of opinion that the excessive mortality among the South Sea Islanders on Yengarie, Yarra Yarra, and Irrowa, the sugar plantations of R. Cran and Co., is owing to poor feeding, bad water, over-work, and the absence of proper care when sick.\textsuperscript{30}

Throughout the 1880s death rates continued to be higher on the plantations than on the farms. In 1883-4 many hundreds of the islanders brought from New Guinea, the Louisiade and Woodlark archipelagos died, mostly of dysentery,\textsuperscript{31} and Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans employed on the same plantations as them ran greater risk of infection and death when the available medical services were stretched thin. Made sensitive on the matter by the death rate among Melanesians employed by the company in Fiji, CSR's general manager, J.M. Knox, wrote to plantation managers in Queensland stressing the need for consideration in the treatment of the islanders. In doing so, he outlined the main causes of the high rate of illness and death. To Crowley, the Manager of the company’s Herbert river plantation, he wrote,

I hear from Mackay that there has been

\textsuperscript{30} QVP, II, 1880:17, see also ‘Register of Pacific Islanders employed upon Plantations, June 1877 to July 1880’, QSA, IPI 3/11: Horrocks to Colonial Secretary, 17 May 1880, QCSO, 5861/1880.

\textsuperscript{31} Corris 1968:94-6, 100-01.
great mortality there amongst the Kanakas this year, which I believe to a great extent to be due to the men being worked too hard during the rains, to their getting too much meat and to the want of proper attention when they are taken ill. Now I want you to understand clearly that we wish that no such charge should ever be brought against us in connection with any of our estates, and as you are at liberty to procure any supplies that you may require, we look to you to see that the men are properly fed and do not get much meat in place of the vegetable diet they require, although the former be cheaper. I also wish that a suitable building be erected and set apart for treating the sick."32

Knox wrote similar letters to other managers in which he urged them not to start the islanders at work in the morning until the dew had lifted and until they had had some substantial food. He stressed the need for warm clothing, instructed one manager to hire a Chinese gardener and establish a vegetable plot for the benefit of the labourers, and praised Crowley for his action in removing his labourers to Hinchinbrook island for a time to escape a dysentery epidemic which was then sweeping through the district.33

32 Knox to Crowley, 3 April 1882, CSRCA, B 204/17.

33 Ibid; Knox to Stuart, 21 February 1882, ibid, Mackay Letter Book; Knox to Stuart, 1 August 1882, ibid; Knox to Crowley, 28 January 1884, ibid, Victoria Letter Book.
The instruction and advice was taken to heart by the managers; the loss of a certain number of man hours per month through sickness came to be regarded as acceptable, and time sheets which survive from the CSR Company's Goondi mill in the Cairns district show that islanders were not put to work in heavy rain.  

Other employers were not so solicitous, and the government was forced to intervene in the vital matter of medical care. In the early 1880s hospitals for the Pacific islanders were established in the Maryborough, Ingham and Mackay districts, and in other areas 'Kanaka wards' were set aside in the general hospitals. The hospitals and wards were financed from a levy on employers who were obliged to send sick islanders to them upon the penalty of a fine. These facilities, however, were frequently criticized. The hospital at Maryborough was badly constructed and situated; the iron roof and lack of ventilation made the wards oppressive, and the infertile land around the building made it impossible for a supply of fresh vegetables to be grown for the patients.  

34 Kanaka Labourers' Time Sheet, Goondi Mill 1884, ibid, B 204/4; Knox to Farquhar, 10 December 1891, ibid, Victoria Letter Book.

35 Maryborough Chronicle, 4 January 1884.
hospital, established in 1884, was poorly equipped and was soon grossly over-crowded; it never succeeded in catering adequately for the needs of the many islanders in this district where conditions on plantations continued to keep sickness and mortality rates high throughout the 1880s. In 1883 a visitor to a 'Kanaka ward' described it as 'one of a row of old wooden buildings, impregnated, no doubt, in every nook with disease and which wants the kindly aid of a firestick to make way for something better'. In 1889 the Ingham hospital, designed to accommodate thirty-five patients, contained seventy-six, many of whom were housed on the verandah of the building which it had become necessary to enclose.

Where there was no Pacific islanders' hospital or accessible 'Kanaka ward', properties upon which Melanesians were employed usually provided a sickroom and had a dispensary which stocked basic medicines. On plantations and farms situated at a

36 'Correspondence respecting the temporary closing of the hospital for Pacific Islanders at Mackay', QVP, II, 1884.

37 Brisbane Courier, 12 January 1883.

distance from the sugar towns arrangements were made with the nearest doctor to pay occasional visits, and on most plantations there was at least one employee with sufficient experience to treat minor injuries and illnesses. 39 In short, although working and living conditions and medical care improved after the mid-1880s, facilities for the care of sick islanders were never of a high standard. Immigration Department officials found difficulty in policing the regulations relating to medical care, and, eventually, the government decided that the best method of reducing the casualty rate among the islanders was to attempt to ensure - by inspection at the island end and on arrival in the colony - that the people recruited were of the highest possible physical standard.

In the 1890s Pacific islanders were affected by a considerable re-organization of the Queensland sugar industry. The lifting of the ban on the importation of Pacific island labour in 1890, and the establishment of government financed central mills, permitted an increased number of small-scale sugar growers to operate successfully. The CSR Company began to lease out areas of land to individual farmers, to each of whom a small number of Pacific

39 Knox to Robertson, 20 February 1883, CSRCA Mackay Letter Book; Knox to Stuart, 1 August 1882, ibid.
islanders indentured to the Company could be allotted. Other large estates were re-organized in a similar way. The number of cane farmers in Queensland rose from 480 in 1892 to 569 in 1893, and there were 1,450 growers by 1897. Although the mills and plantations continued to employ the majority of islanders on their first indenture, there was a higher likelihood than in the previous decade that new arrivals would be assigned to a small property where they would work with perhaps a dozen other islanders rather than with hundreds as on the plantations. This meant that the islanders' chances of avoiding serious illness and death increased considerably, for the health record of the cane farms remained better than that of the plantations.

Solomon Islanders were to be found, of course, in all sugar districts along the Queensland coast, from Cairns to Maryborough, but they were concentrated in Bundaberg and Mackay. The two largest employers in these districts were A.H. and E. Young's Fairymead mill and plantation in the

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former, and the CSR Company's Homebush mill and plantation in the latter. The Young brothers 'specialized' in Solomon Islanders in the 1890s, and the CSR Company had a preference for them at Mackay because they were considered better able to endure its 'trying climate'.

THE arrival of new recruits at the Queensland ports whether Maryborough, Bundaberg, Mackay or Cairns, and in Fiji at Levuka and Suva was, for them, an exciting event. Old hands in Queensland recall witnessing the arrival of the labour ships with their decks covered by excited islanders some of whom swarmed up the masts and rigging to get a broader view of the country about which they had heard so much. In both colonies the recruits underwent a medical inspection - at which none of the interested parties, recruiters or prospective employers, were permitted to be present - and a simple test was made in pidgin English and by gesture of their willingness to work for three years. Having been passed by the doctor and an Immigration Department officer, the recruits were assigned to their employers who were licensed by the government.

42 Knox to Parbury Lamb and Co., 5, 18 December 1886, CSRCA, B 203/1; Brisbane Courier, 6 March 1895.

43 Circulars to the Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, circular of 20 March 1900, QSA, 27/326; Argus, 20 December 1892.
to take a certain number and had made arrangements with the ships' charterers accordingly. In Queensland the islanders were transported to the plantation or farm by dray or train if the distance were more than a few miles. In Fiji they were taken to the copra plantations scattered throughout the group in small ships which chartered for the work. It was usual there for the immigrants to rest for a time at the Immigration Department depot before being assigned; communications in the group were slow, and this rest period was often extended when the arrival of the employer or his agent was delayed. Shipment to farm or plantation was effected with greater despatch in Queensland and new arrivals were given only a few days to accustom themselves to their new surroundings before being set to work.

In neither colony, however, did the recruits arrive on the plantations in total ignorance of what was expected of them and the conditions under which they would work. As each ship carried a number of old hands, 'new chums' learned a good deal in the course of the voyage about the work they would do. They soon learned more on arrival in the colony. In Queensland

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44 See Notes of evidence prepared by Pacific Island Labour Inspectors for the Ingham, Mackay and Townsville districts, 1884, evidence of A.R. MacDonald, Mackay, QSA, 36/3660.
islanders who intended to return to their homes gathered in the town when a recruiting vessel came into port, and 'new chums' were usually able to fraternize with them for a short time. New comers certainly met experienced men immediately on arrival in Fiji for there were always a few islanders, indentured to the Colonial Secretary, who worked in various capacities at the 'Polynesian' depot.  

In Fiji for their first three years the islanders were supposed to work on a task system whereby a certain amount of work - husking of coconuts, packing and carrying bags of copra, clearing and planting of land - was allotted as reasonable for an able-bodied man to perform in six hours. The regulations stated that no more than one and a half tasks were to be performed by each man per day. In Queensland work was done on a time basis. In practice the task system seems not always to have been followed in Fiji. Some men who worked there recall that they were assigned tasks - in some cases to cut copra and fill two bags in a day - and that this was a full day's work. One man who worked as

45 Corney to Colonial Secretary, 6 October 1885, FCSO, 2620/1885.

46 'Regulations...with respect to the treatment of Polynesian Immigrants', enclosed in Anson to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1884, FCSO, 518/1884.
a butcher near Suva recalls that he was allotted the task of preparing a certain amount of meat and delivering it around the town each day. Others, however, remember that they simply worked a day through as in Queensland, with the jobs they did, the length of breaks, and adjustments to the weather depending upon the decision of the overseer.

The temperament of the overseers was important in determining whether the islander reacted favourably or unfavourably to plantation life. When Melanesians were employed on sugar plantations in Fiji it was a constant complaint of proprietors and Immigration Department officials that the demand for men of tact and understanding to fill these positions far exceeded the supply. It was an advantage enjoyed by those who worked on copra plantations that the owners and overseers there were often one and the same person. In touch with their employees, and ultimately responsible for their well-being, these men were more likely to be considerate towards the islanders than sugar plantation overseers. In Queensland the quality of overseers varied greatly: the CSR Company tried to secure good men by offering them high wages and comfortable quarters and, by the

47 Anson to Colonial Secretary, 14 September 1882, ibid, 2185/1882.
1890s, most plantations owners did the same. Some of the overseers and managers had come to Queensland from Jamaica, Trinidad or Mauritius where they had gained experience in sugar growing and the management of an indentured labour force. The employers of small numbers of islanders were like their counterparts in Fiji on the whole although there were exceptions - irresponsible or impecunious employers who were lax in providing adequate rations and medical treatment and who infringed other regulations, especially those regarding the paying of return passage money for their employees.

Whether the task or time system was worked to, the labourers' day was long; usually they worked from first light to dusk, with a break of one hour for a meal in the middle of the day. Arrangements varied, however; on some Fiji plantations the men began work without having breakfasted (which they disliked doing) and had two breaks during the day.

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48 Knox to Stuart, 5 July 1882, CSRCA, Mackay Letter Book; Knox to Robertson, 9 January 1883, ibid.

49 Craig 1881:87.

If they were working at a distance from the living quarters, food and water were brought out to them, otherwise they ate in a mess or in their barracks or huts. Optimum conditions for indentured labourers seem to have prevailed on the Victoria plantation, at Ingham, north Queensland. In 1887 the manager wrote:

...the boys never actually work 10 hours a day - which is, I believe, the required time, though I am not aware that there are any regulations on the subject. They are sent off to work at 6 a.m., but it is always 6.30 before they get to work, and at 11.30 they knock off for dinner and resume work at 12.30 and work till about 5.15, so as to get home by about 5.30 or shortly after; and this has been the practice ever since I have been on the plantation.51

In Fiji no more than five hours' work was required from the labourers on Saturday, and Sunday was a free day. The working hours for Saturday were not specified in Queensland, but work usually stopped at mid-day, and the islanders were not required to work on Sunday.

In both colonies provision was made for periodical inspection of properties upon which Melanesian worked by officers of the Department of Immigration. Such inspections were more easily made in Queensland where each district had an inspector whose duty it was

51 Extracts from correspondence between C.E. Forster, manager Victoria plantation, and E.W. Knox, 1888-9, CSRCA, B 204/9.
to supervise the bi-annual payment of the islanders, and who usually took this opportunity to inspect the conditions under which they worked. In Fiji regular inspection was more difficult to arrange and the duty fell usually upon stipendiary magistrates, whose attention was directed to the plantations when excessively high rates of sickness and mortality occurred, or when a planter chose to employ an increased number of islanders and existing facilities needed inspection. Official inspections were occasionally made, however, and made thoroughly, and some employers with consistently bad records were forbidden to employ Pacific islanders.

In Queensland the inspectors were often men of sympathy and understanding. Douglas Rannie, who was a government agent for many years and acquired a thorough knowledge of the islanders, provides an example. As inspector in the Mackay district Rannie served the government and the Melanesians well; he was a particularly sympathetic advocate for the latter at the time when the repatriation from Queensland was being arranged. Woodward at Maryborough was conscientious enough in his duties to earn 'a reputation

52 Smart to Manager, 5 August 1901, Alexandra Plantation Letter Book, 1900-06.

53 Corney to Colonial Secretary, 6 October 1885, FCSO, 2620/1885.
for impracticability', and he is remembered by Solomon Islanders who worked in the district as a friend and adviser. Henry St George Caulfield, the inspector at Bundaberg, won the confidence and friendship of hundreds of islanders there. Caulfield came to Queensland in 1881 from Ceylon where he had had thirteen years' experience as an overseer of immigrant labourers. Caulfield published a modest account of his career, and from this, and the recollections of him held by Melanesian and European informants, it is clear that his understanding of the problems and needs of the islanders was profound. He was zealous in his duties as an inspector of plantations, banking agent, and investigator of islanders' complaints against their employers. Like Rannie, Caulfield endeavoured to help islanders who wished to avoid deportation in 1906-7.  

In Fiji the Melanesians had little knowledge of the regulations which existed for their protection. Most of those who elected to remain in the colony after they had served their first indenture took work in and around Suva, Levuka and Labasa, and so were not on hand to give 'new chums' the benefit of their

experience. In Queensland matters were different. Time-expired men often re-engaged with their original employer (at higher wages) and, with three years' experience and, in many cases, a close acquaintance with the district inspector to their credit, they were well equipped to advise their inexperienced compatriots. 'The Kanaka knows his rights to a tittle', commented one who enquired into the subject in 1892, 'Everyday experience proves that the Polynesian labourer is not the man to hesitate about complaining to the official "protector", or "inspector"...if he considers himself wronged.' One point, however, upon which men who had worked in both places were clear, was with reference to their wages. When questioned about this, men who had worked in Queensland said that in their first three years they were paid 'half crown one week', and those who had been to Fiji said 'half crown two weeks'. Although the labourers were paid bi-annually in Queensland, and usually at the end of their term in Fiji, they thought of their earnings in weekly and fortnightly terms possibly because employers thought it more meaningful and encouraging to explain it to them in this way,

55 See Return of Solomon Island Immigrants not noted as dead or repatriated - up to January 1894, enclosed in Colonial Secretary to Agent General of Immigration, 30 December 1893, PSCO, 4325/1893.

56 Forbes 1892:643.
and also because some employers made the islanders advances against their wages. 57

On cane farms in Queensland and the smaller copra plantations in Fiji, islanders were housed in buildings which varied in size and facilities according to the resources and experience of the owner. The Queensland plantations' grass humpies, so deplored by Horrocks in the late 1870s, 58 were never completely done away with, although wooden buildings with corrugated iron roofs were usual by the 1890s. On the plantations the labourers were provided with barracks which were built of timber, had iron roofs, and provision for an interior fire. It was the usual practice on estates where large numbers of Melanesians were employed to separate them in the barracks. Where possible, for example, New Hebrideans were kept apart from Solomon Islanders. On the largest plantations it was possible to separate the people who came from different islands within the same group and, sometimes, to keep apart people from different districts of the same island—Malaitan Kwara'ae


58 Horrocks to Colonial Secretary, 13 August 1878, FCSO, 3746/1878.
The working parties, however, were made up according to the physical condition and experience of the labourers available, and so people from different islands were thrown in together. These polyglot working gangs seem to have performed their tasks in harmony under the supervision of a 'driver' - usually a European but sometimes an experienced islander.

'North Queensland bred no Simon Legrees', as Bolton says, but the 'drivers' did not always rely on words to get the work done. Informants recall being rudely roused in the morning, shouted at, slapped, and having their ears tweaked if their work was not satisfactory. Conditions were similar in Fiji, where discipline was perhaps a little more severe, although instances such as the deaths from whipping of two Solomon Islands on the Penang Sugar Estate

59 Neame, 'Diary':99, TS in Hinchinbrook Shire Council, Historical Collection, Ingham, Queensland; Queensland, 22 May 1926. These arrangements were made in an effort to reduce the inevitable tensions of a barracks life. Sometimes serious disturbances occurred in the living quarters; in 1883 on Victoria plantation there was a fight serious enough to cause a directive to be issued to plantation managers 'to make it a rule not to allow the boys to take their tools into the houses, but to have a small shed erected specially for the purpose and provided with lock and key'. Knox to Robertson, 2 August 1883, CSRCA, Mackay Letter Book.

60 Bolton 1963:149.
at Raki Raki were exceptional. However, the islanders were not without means of protecting themselves against bad employers. Plantations on which the 'drivers' habitually bullied the labourers found difficulty in getting men to engage for a second term, and they acquired a bad name back in the islands.

In general, the islanders did not find their work too hard, although those of poorer physique had difficulties if they were set to work in a party of men with greater stamina than their own; the best overseers, however, took pains to prevent this from happening. The complaint most frequently voiced by informants who worked in Queensland was with regard to the morning cold in winter. The islanders were generally unenthusiastic about the work on the copra plantations in Fiji, but they found much to enjoy about working sugar in Queensland. One informant who had worked in both places eloquently contrasted the dullness of filling and carrying heavy bags of copra - solitary tasks - with the pleasure of working in concert with others at loading the cane trucks and riding the train into the mill.

Entertainments for the Melanesians employed on copra plantations in Fiji were few. They were limited, in fact, to dancing, gambling, and otherwise

61 Fiji Times, 21 April 1877; Scarr 1967b:147.
associating with the Fijians. These activities provided sufficient diversion, apparently, and the good relations the Melanesians enjoyed with the Fijians, in contrast to the ill-feeling which was often felt between Fijians and Indians, was one of the reasons why the copra planters found them contented and satisfactory employees. For those who worked near Suva, Levuka, or Labasa, there were more novelties offering. The islanders could shop, drink, and gamble in the towns, and many spent their free time on the wharves with sailors from all over the Pacific. However, these attractions were open almost exclusively to the time-expired men who worked on the wharves and in the stores of the towns, and received higher and more regular wages than the men serving their first term.

In Queensland the islanders seem to have found life more diverting and enjoyable. Fairymead and Bingera, the two plantations upon which most of the men of the Bundaberg district were employed, were close to the town, as were the plantations and farms at Ayr, Proserpine, and in the Maryborough district. Around Mackay the estates were more scattered; the average distance from the town was thirteen miles, but this takes into account one plantation which was sixty miles distant. The majority of islanders employed in the district were within ten miles of the town, and this was an insignificant walking
distance for them. The visit to the town at week-ends was a great attraction to the islanders. In all the sugar centres 'China towns' grew up, areas in which there were boarding houses owned by Chinese or time-expired islanders, and 'Kanaka shops', which stocked the goods the islanders preferred. On Saturday nights the streets of Bundaberg and other towns were thronged with islanders. Observers made a distinction between these and the few derelicts who were always in the towns 'hanging about'. The former were in festive mood:

From all quarters you will see swarms of Kanakas coming quietly down the middle of the street with all the graciousness that money and "trade" drapery can make them. A tall straw hat, with a sharp silk necktie that would shame the sun at noonday, with a pipe generally a clay - sometimes a briar or a meerschaum - all this, with much gutteral chattering and laughing makes up a Bundaberg Kanaka on Saturday night and he never travels singly.

Those who did not visit the towns found ways to occupy their leisure on or near their places of work. Apart from the considerable number who slept for most of the

62 QVP, IV, 1889: Appendix 18.
63 Wide Bay and Burnett Directory, 1887: pages unnumbered; on the islanders in the towns see also Bundaberg Star, 29 September 1876; Queenslander, 29 September 1906; Maryborough Chronicle, 4 October 1958; Collinson 1939:77-8; Shepherd, n.d.:219; Turner 1955:65.
week-end, there were others who gambled, visited friends on other farms and plantations, fished, or hunted birds and other game. Some of the plantations were on the routes of hawkers, whose visits provided diversion, and informants recall that they frequently danced, sang, and played concertinas, jew's harps and tin whistles around camp fires in the evening.

As in Fiji, it was usually the time-expired men in Queensland who were able to sample the flesh pots of the towns. It was forbidden by law to supply islanders with liquor, but many publicans were willing to risk the small fine. If an islander had money, it was not difficult for him to get rum or whisky through an obliging European, or a demijohn of 'samshu' from a Chinese.\(^6\) Gambling houses run by Chinese, Japanese and time-expired islanders flourished in the sugar towns, and it was not uncommon for an unlucky gambler to re-engage for a further three years rather than face the humiliation of returning home empty-handed.\(^6\) In Mackay the

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\(^6\) Mackay Mercury, 10 April, 21 August 1875, 14 October 1876; Mackay Standard, 3 October 1879; Port Denison Times, 24 October 1885; Cairns Morning Post, 5 January, 26 February 1905, 16 January 1906; Mossman Champion, 20 December 1906; QVP, II, 1889:136; Knox to Forrest, 6 November 1888, CSRCA, B 204/6.

\(^6\) Maryborough Chronicle, 27 May 1883; QVP, II, 1906:315.
islanders frequently attended week-end race meetings, and one particular meeting was described as 'their great carnival'. On this occasion,

The boss of a plantation usually makes the practice of advancing half-a-crown apiece to all his 'boys' out of their three years stipend, so as to ensure a happy holiday and even the racing officials do all in their power to allow the despised kanaka to enjoy unalloyed happiness at as reasonable a rate as possible. The following notice of tariff of charges appears at the entry gate to the racecourse: Horsemen, 1s 6d; Footpassengers, 1s; Kanakas 6d.66

In some of the towns islanders frequented brothels in which European, Japanese and Aboriginal women worked. There were also some itinerant prostitutes who solicited near the plantations and farms, to the anger of managers and overseers who were faced with outbreaks of venereal disease among their labourers.67 It was probably rare for unsophisticated men serving their first term to avail themselves of the prostitutes, but, according to informants, some did so. Stories about the prostitutes, especially the European women, were listened to with appreciation back in the islands to the distress of missionaries and employers.

66 Queensland Figaro, 23 June 1883.

67 Maryborough Chronicle, 3 January 1885, 27 May 1895; Worker, 19 February 1895; QVP, II, 1889:244; Forster to Knox, 25 October 1901, CSRCA, B 204/7.
When feeling against Pacific Island labour in Queensland ran high, criticism was focussed on the time-expired men. Concern was felt about their carrying arms; they were usually held to blame for serious disturbances of the peace - such as the Mackay racecourse riot of 1883 - and outraged citizens frequently complained about the rowdiness of the boarding houses they kept in the back streets of the towns.\textsuperscript{68} In defiance of the regulations, time-expired islanders worked as domestic servants, on farms, in stores and gardens, and as members of pearl-diving crews. In 1889, 2,879 time-expired men were reckoned to be in the colony,\textsuperscript{69} and in places north of Townsville, where labour was in short supply, they could demand and receive wages of £1 per week. According to one employer in the Herbert river district there was 'a sort of union amongst them'.\textsuperscript{70} Organization of this sort on the part of the islanders was much resented, as it was when islanders competed directly with Europeans by setting

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Mackay Mercury}, 12, 19, 26 May 1876; \textit{Bundaberg Star}, 8 June 1877; \textit{Port Denison Times}, 12 January 1884; Brenan to Under Secretary, 24 March 1900 (and enclosures) QCSO, 4418/1900.

\textsuperscript{69} 'Kanaka Statistics', \textit{QVP}, III, 1889.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{QVP}, IV, 1889:48.
up as contractors for fencing and scrub clearing. 71

Although no official record of the numbers of islanders who signed on for second terms exists, it is likely that about half of those who went to Queensland did so. Caulfield, usually well-informed about the behaviour of the islanders in his district, put the rate of re-engagement at about one in two. 72

In 1901 it was reckoned that about 50% of the 9,327 Melanesians in Queensland were time-expired men, 73 at least half of whom would have been Solomon Islanders. It was the opinion generally among informants that 'most' people who went to Queensland stayed longer than three years; five of the eight survivors contacted by the present writer in 1968 had done so.

Islanders re-engaged for a variety of reasons. Some feared to return, and some who did so became disillusioned about conditions in the islands and came back to the colony resolved to stay. Others decided to serve two or three terms in succession in order to return home with wealth and prestige beyond the ordinary. In Queensland some employers wanted continuity of labour and held out considerable inducements to the islanders to sign on again upon

71 Ibid: 208; Mackay Mercury, 6, 9 November 1878.

72 QVP, IV, 1889: 218; Smith 1892: 18; Brisbane Courier, 8 April 1892.

73 Sydney Daily Telegraph, 8 October 1901.
the expiry of their first term. In 1885 the CSR Company agreed to pay between £12 and £15 per annum, as well as a £5 bonus on the signing of the agreement, to labourers who re-engaged. Experienced and seasoned men were always in demand and the managers of mills and plantations were instructed to try to persuade them to re-engage. On some occasions pressure was brought to bear. In 1903 the labour vessel Coquette caught fire in Townsville harbour and was destroyed. The prospective returns - all Solomon Islanders - were transhipped to Bundaberg where a number of them were coerced - probably by being told that they would have a long wait for another ship and would have to live on their capital - into signing new agreements.

In 1906 some Bundaberg storekeepers, interested in keeping the islanders' custom, attempted to persuade men to re-engage. But in the majority of cases islanders who decided to remain in the colony made a free decision.

Among the very experienced men there were groups of friends who, upon the expiry of their agreements, consulted among themselves whether to

74 Notes on the employment of Pacific Islanders, CSRCA, B 201/19-20; Knox to McLean, 2 November 1892, ibid, Homebush Letter Book; Brenan to Under Secretary, 2 May 1905, QSA, PRE/84.

75 'Briefs arising from cases re. The Pacific Island Labourers Act, 1888-1890', QSA, 36/3849.
return or re-engage. When they chose the latter course, they took work in different places and met again at the end of the next term to discuss the matter once more. Many of the men who stayed for years on the same plantation raised their standard of living far above that of the barracks. This was observed on a Mackay plantation in 1893:

The time-expired boy, as a rule, has adopted the household customs of civilization. He has a bedroom and a living room; his beds rise to the dignity of mosquito curtains; his kitchen boasts of table and chairs and pots and plates; his wife becomes a fairly good cook, and I have seen suppers prepared in kanaka huts which an epicure need not disdain. Many of the men have a slight knowledge of gardening, and all who choose are allowed on most plantations to have gardens, in which they grow vegetables for their own use.

In Fiji, the time-expired men gained experience of all the islands and towns in the group. They worked on board ships, as house servants, road builders, storemen and dock labourers. As in Queensland, they were often

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76 Brenan to Under Secretary, 16 February 1906, QSA, PRE/84.

77 Queenslander, 11 February 1893.

78 Report on Polynesian Immigration 1885 and 1886, enclosed in Agent General of Immigration to Acting Colonial Secretary, 30 November 1887, FCSO, 3849/1887.
regarded with suspicion by the Europeans for failing to behave as it was thought the members of a coloured labour force should.

At present there is a residuum of the free Polynesian labourer to be found about the towns. But circumstances have so far altered as to lessen the willingness to engage for household work. Four times in each month the representatives of this class can obtain employment on the steamers. The money they earn enables them to live in idleness for the term during which they are not at work. These people have large buris, built on ground leased by them, in which they congregate and lead a kind of club life in which they revel. Free from domination or direct personal control, they pass their days and nights in that luxury of inaction which is intensified by occasional paroxysms of hard work which supplies them with the means of doing nothing for the balance of their time. 79

Some Solomon Islanders who went to Samoa were lost to their islands for long periods, and, in a few cases, permanently. In 1897 there were only 'about five in all' Solomon Islanders still under indenture to German planters. A few others refused to return to their homes because they had married Samoan women. 'They give no trouble', the British consul reported of

79 Fiji Times, 25 April 1891.
them, 'and get satisfactory employment at good wages and seldom have to appeal for official assistance.'

THE acculturation of the labour migrants began on their voyages to the colonies. Distrust and fear of the stranger was a Melanesian habit of mind, and the throwing together in the recruiting ships of islanders who were accustomed to regarding almost all people with whom they were not acquainted as potential enemies caused some tensions and problems for islanders and Europeans alike.

In particular, people from other islands in the Solomons had a dread of Malaitans and, on occasion, they refused to recruit when the vessel carried a large number of Malaitans or they learned that she was bound for Malaita. Malaitans were self-assertive and contemptuous of others, and there must have been a good deal of quarrelling and fighting in the hold which did not come to the notice of the government agents. Sometimes it did, however, as aboard the Fiji vessel *Marion Rennie* in 1877. The government agent noted that quarrelling among the islanders was common and that on one occasion 'a biting match occurred between a Malayta and a Guadalcanar....' The agent acted to prevent such

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80 Cusack Smith to High Commissioner, 8 October 1897, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 524/1897.

81 *Argus*, 7 December 1892; *Cromar* 1935:257.
fights. 'I mustered all the immigrants', he wrote in his log, 'and told them I should punish anyone striking another, that they must bring any complaints to me. I stopped the belligerents' tobacco which I issue twice a week.'

Most of the quarrelling and disciplining was probably of this order. However the voyage did contribute to a lessening of mutual fears and suspicions, especially among the people from the large islands such as Malaita, Guadalcanal and San Cristobal. People from the language-culture areas of these islands did not share a common language, but communication between them aboard ship was possible. There were accomplished linguists who had a command of several languages and could interpret, and, as is still the case today, even when two people could not speak each other's primary language, they were often able to communicate through another tongue known to them both. Distrust and hostility were further broken down aboard ship by the presence and example of old hands who were less subject to parochialism than raw recruits and who, from their experience, commanded respect whatever their origin.

Once the Melanesians were settled in the colony, and were left to themselves for much of the

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82 Journal of R. Haddock, Marion Rennie, 6 October 1877.
time, there were many opportunities for aggression and hostility to vent themselves. In Queensland frequent clashes occurred between the Tanese and Malaitans, who seem to have singled each other out as natural enemies. They were the most volatile of the Pacific islanders and they were also regarded as the best workers. They engaged in some serious fights on the plantations and in the towns, but most of their contests were slanging matches and brief scuffles, with many non-participating observers and few injuries. At times, fights between people employed on different plantations were rather more like sporting events than serious battles. These fights were most common at week-ends and on holidays, especially at Christmas when the islanders were usually given a few days rest from work. Fights between people who worked on the same plantation were not uncommon and these sometimes resulted in men being seriously injured or killed. These serious conflicts usually arose from disputes over women and drunken arguments between gamblers. In large-scale brawls Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans were usually found in opposition to each other, typically with a hard core of Malaitans and Tanese in each camp. 83

83 Brisbane Courier, 10 January 1883, 6 March 1895; Queensland Figaro, 12 May 1883; QPD, LXXII, 1894:1462; Maryborough Chronicle, 8 January 1906; Caulfield 1937:part V; Delta Advocate, 3 September 1938.
In Fiji the Melanesians quarrelled and fought among themselves less frequently than in Queensland. Because, by the late 1880s, the islanders were employed mostly in small numbers on copra plantations, it was usually possible for an employer to secure a consignment of people who had arrived in the colony in the same ship, and who were often from the same island; this reduced the chances of dissension amongst them. Also important was the fact that by the late 1870s very few Tannese migrated to Fiji and so the Malaitans did not have the provoking and worthy opponents they had in Queensland. Perhaps the most important reason for the harmony, however, is suggested by the account of Egita - a Malaitan who went to Fiji in the closing years of the labour trade - of his initial reception. 'When we landed on the wharf', he said, 'a policeman came and told us that if there was any fighting amongst us we would be shot.' After this, he recalls, Solomon Islanders and others greeted each other as 'brother', as the Europeans instructed them to do, when they met along the road.

Unlike the system which operated among

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84 Fights did occur however, for some examples see Fiji Times, 23 December 1871, 27 October 1877, 11 April 1883.

85 See 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'.
Indian labourers in Fiji, whereby sirdars were chosen among the ranks of the indentured Indians, no Melanesians under indenture in Fiji or Queensland were officially elevated above others. In the absence of any imposed authority of this kind, the Melanesians had to work out satisfactory living and working arrangements for themselves, which was made difficult by their divisiveness and the diversity of their origins. On the large plantations, people from the same island attempted to assert their superiority over others in minor ways - by monopolising the favoured jobs and avoiding the unpleasant ones for example - when they had sufficient numbers and experience to do so. Where leaders appeared among the Melanesians they became so usually by virtue of their experience of colonial conditions rather than through any prestige they might have had in the islands. Inter-island hostilities, the arrogance of the more experienced men, and the favouritism displayed by men who were allotted special tasks - such as the dispensing of rations - created tensions among the labourers. The same circumstances, however, introduced the migrant labourers to new concepts of authority and prestige, and new patterns of behaviour, which tested their

87 QVP, II, 1889:203.
faith in the traditional order of the islands.

IN Queensland the social status of the Melanesians was low, not, perhaps, as low as that of the Aborigines, but they were generally regarded as people who bore the curse of Canaan. They did not enjoy equality with other residents before the law. Islanders who broke the law were likely to encounter severity of treatment which reflected the suspicion of them which was widely felt. The majority of Melanesians were law-abiding, but arrests for drunkenness and disorderly behaviour were common and were followed by severe penalties. As was true in the southern states of America and in other societies where imported coloured labour was used, there was a fear in the minds of Europeans in the sugar districts that the presence of so many unattached male islanders constituted a threat to white womanhood. In fact the incidence of sexual crimes committed by islanders was quite low, but those who were found guilty of such offences

88 Mackay Mercury, 10 April, 21 August 1875; Maryborough Chronicle, 23 January 1896; Cairns Morning Post, 23 June, 11 September 1903, 5 January, 26 February 1904.

89 Mackay Mercury, 26 May, 1 September 1876, 1 December 1877, 26 January, 7 February 1893; QPD, LXXXII, 1899:787; 'Vital Statistics, 1894', QVP. III, 1895:v.
invariably felt the full weight of the law. In most cases involving sexual attacks and crimes of violence, the available evidence suggests that the Melanesians responsible were deranged.\(^9^0\) Madness was not unknown in the islands, and it was not always possible for deranged people, whose condition was not immediately obvious, to be singled out by the recruiters. Furthermore, not all men adapted well to conditions in the colonies: unfamiliar diet, hard regular work, and illness or the constant threat of it, were intolerable to some and violent behaviour was their reaction. However, apart from cases where the offending islanders seem to have been mentally disturbed, violent crimes such as attacks on overseers, or premeditated robberies were rare.

In most cases where one Melanesian killed another a charge of manslaughter was brought, but when Europeans were the victims the charge was always murder and the death penalty was usually imposed. Between 1895 and 1906, when there were twelve executions for murder in Queensland, eight were of Solomon Islanders - seven Malaitans and one from Gela. These were the only Pacific islanders to

\(^9^0\) *Bundaberg Star*, 18, 25 May, 20 October 1877, 4 May, 26 October 1878; *Maryborough Chronicle*, 16 December 1876; *Port Denison Times*, 20 February 1875; *Queenslander*, 4 April 1903.
be executed in this period. In arresting suspected law breakers, and indeed in all their dealings with Melanesians, the police were not gentle. Legal procedures bewildered the islanders whose minds were often already confused. In the case of Gosaro, the Malaitan found guilty in 1905 of murdering a European whose chief occupation was supplying islanders and Aborigines with liquor, there was a strong likelihood that he was innocent of the act. A clergyman who visited Gosaro shortly before his execution believed that the condemned man had had no understanding of his trial nor of the significance of the confession he had made. His end was a miserable one:

He died on April 17, and it was reported officially from Brisbane that two feet eight and a half inches of slack was used, and that he was hanging for half an hour, for a long proportion of which time he was still alive.

91 It does not speak well for the administration of justice in Queensland that, in the period 1890 to 1906, fifteen of the twenty-four men executed were coloured - eight Solomon Islanders, three Aborigines, a Japanese, and a Chinese. See 'Statistics of the Colony of Queensland', reports of the Registrar-General published in QVP. Five Malaitans were sentenced to death for murder in Bundaberg in 1896, but their sentences were commuted to twelve years' imprisonment to be followed by deportation. Department of Justice, Calendar of criminals brought to trial at Bundaberg, 1883-1923, QSA, 36/3211; Correspondence respecting, and a return of, Polynesian Islanders who had served sentences from 1886-99', QSA, PRI/8.

The news of executions was conveyed to the islands by returning labourers and was received there as news of violent death was customarily greeted. This was noted by the government agent of a Queensland recruiting vessel which visited Taka Taka, on the south-east coast of Malaita, after the executions in May 1895 of the Malaitans Novasemoi and Miore. The government agent saw signs of hostility on shore and decided not to send the boats in. He noted in his diary:

On returning to the ship we discovered from the canoes that they intend to take the boats and have a white man in revenge for the two boys that were hung in Queensland. It appears one of them belonging to this place and the other to Manakowai.93

At their worst, European attitudes towards the islanders fell little short of Mississippian racism and South African apartheid. In 1876, a vigilante committee was organized under the name of the 'white League'. This body agitated for the disarming of all islanders in the district, and advocated that all actions towards them should proceed from the assumption that they were 'an antagonistic race'. Twenty years later the Maryborough Chamber of

93 Appendix A to Brenan to Chief Secretary, 9 July 1897, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 15 July 1897, QSA, GOV A 32.
Commerce requested that separate railway carriages be set aside for 'kanakas'. However, it was generally thought that the islanders were a necessary evil, and a tolerant, if patronizing, view of them was taken by most Europeans.

It is indicative of the less novel and less disturbing conditions in Fiji that, after the mid-1880s, it was rare for Melanesians to be brought before the courts. When employment upon the large plantations was the rule, the tensions caused by unsuitable work, high death and illness rates, and unsatisfactory and overcrowded living quarters found expression in violence - in 1884 one Melanesian immigrant was hanged and there were sixty-nine serving terms of imprisonment. On the copra plantations the diet was familiar, death rates were low, and it was more conducive to contentment and harmony among the Melanesians that they drank yagona in Fijian villages rather than whisky and rum in the back streets of the Queensland sugar towns. In 1893 there were only four prosecutions of Pacific islanders, and the Agent General of Immigration described them

94 Mackay Mercury, 26 May 1876, 1 December 1877; Worker, 19 January 1895.

95 Annual Report on Polynesian Immigration for the year 1884, FCSO, 225/1892.
as 'quiet and law abiding'. He reported in 1901 that they were 'as usual a quiet and well behaved class', and his comment in 1905 summed up the colony's experience of the islanders over the past twenty years: 

There can be no question but that these immigrants form, as a class, an industrious, quiet and law abiding section of the community.  

In Queensland the Melanesians were exposed to many pressures and had experiences which impelled them to adopt new habits and attitudes. Overseers taught them the use of unfamiliar tools, shopkeepers tried to inculcate in them new tastes in hardware and drapery, district inspectors endeavoured to teach them the value of money and the virtue of saving, while in the 'China towns' they were introduced to liquor and gambling by Europeans, Chinese and men of their own race whose intentions ran clean contrary to those of the inspectors. The most determined assault upon the Melanesians' customs, beliefs and values, however, was that made by Christian missionaries of various denominations. In Fiji, although to a lesser extent and affecting fewer people than in Queensland, similar efforts were

96 Polynesian Immigration, Report for 1894, ibid, 2550/1895.

made to win the Melanesians away from paganism.

In 1871 the British consul at Levuka impressed upon planters the desirability of permitting their Melanesian labourers access to Christian teaching and of encouraging them to attend church, 'taking care' he added, 'that when they do so they be properly clad'. Some Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans had been baptized as Methodists by the mid-1880s, and by this time Anglicans, Wesleyans and Roman Catholics were making determined efforts to secure converts among the immigrants. In his report for 1889 the Agent General of Immigration noted that 'a large number of Polynesians have joined the churches and schools conducted by ministers of various religious denominations, and one marriage was registered during the year'. The following year it was reported in the Fiji Times that the Wesleyan church was active among the Solomon Islanders and New Hebrideans at Levuka, Suva and Ba. In Suva a Mr Beauclerc had established a school for Melanesians; no opportunity to preach the gospel on accessible plantations was missed, and, according to the paper, 'an improvement in the conduct of the Polynesians

98 March to various planters, 1 May 1871, FO 58/129.

99 Acting Agent General of Immigration to Colonial Secretary, 28 July 1890, FCSO, 2266/1890.
can be noticed. The Melanesian mission confined its work to Suva and Levuka; throughout the 1890s an average of fifty Solomon Islanders attended classes in Levuka and 150 attended in Suva.

The numbers of Christian converts, and instances of marriages between islanders being solemnized in Christian churches, continued to increase. Few of the islanders serving their first indenture came into contact with Christianity, but the majority of those who stayed for more than three years in the colony did so. The Melanesian Christians built churches themselves in Suva and Levuka, and their attraction to Christianity found favour in the eyes of the Immigration Department:

The Polynesian in the Colony is generally free from disposition to crime of any kind, a result no doubt largely brought about by the religious and other instruction provided for them by the several church missions, and of which they have been very ready to take advantage.

In Queensland, the first serious mission work among the islanders was that of Mrs Mary Goodwin Robinson at Mackay. In 1882 Mrs Robinson began Bible reading classes for a few islanders in her living

1 Fiji Times, 14 November 1891.
2 Tippett 1967:54, 357.
room. Eventually she received financial support from some of the Mackay planters - the manager of one plantation, Meadowlands, contributed four acres of land upon which a church-cum-school was built - from the Melanesian Mission, and she was assisted in her work by the Reverend W.A. Turner of Mackay. Instruction at the Goodwin mission - later known as the Selwyn mission - was in pidgin English and the emphasis was on the basic lessons of the Bible. Nevertheless, in the twenty-four years of its existence, many hundreds of Melanesians learned to read and write at this mission. The islanders displayed great enthusiasm for this school, baptisms were frequent, and in 1889 it was reported that many men travelled miles on foot and went without their evening meal in order to attend classes.  

In Bundaberg and Maryborough the Anglican priests endeavoured to attract Melanesians to their regular services, but it was not until the Reverend J. Clayton of Bundaberg established special 'Kanaka classes' in 1892, that much headway was made. These classes were very successful. According to Clayton's report an average of 236 islanders attended services  

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4 Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Mission, 1894:passim, especially extract from a letter from Mrs Robinson to Rev. A. Brittain, 16 August 1894; Smart to Manager, 3, 17 September, 1 October 1906, Alexandra Plantation Letter Book.
on Sunday, more than 200 attended evening classes throughout the week, and there were about thirty baptisms annually. The Church of England catered in a similar way for the islanders in the Rockhampton district. Initially, the priest paid attention solely to the labourers employed on the Yeppoon sugar plantation, but eventually efforts were made to contact all Melanesians in the district. A 'Kanaka' church was built in north Rockhampton which in time became a meeting place for the islanders, many of whom settled in close proximity to it.

In 1887 the Presbyterian church established a school at Walkerston, about nine miles from Mackay, under the supervision of the Reverend J. McIntyre. This mission conducted Sunday services and week-end classes (which, on the average, about 200 islanders attended), and the best pupils were trained as teachers to carry on the work on the plantations. Like the Selwyn mission, the Walkerston school received financial support from the planters. McIntyre concentrated his efforts upon the New Hebrideans in the hope that converts who returned to the group would

5 Smith 1892:8-9.

6 QVP, IV, 1889:208; The Church Gazette, Diocese of Rockhampton, LXIV, 1960.
be able to aid the Presbyterian missionaries there.  

In the numbers of islanders instructed and the impact made upon them, the Anglican and Presbyterian missions were surpassed by the Queensland Kanaka Mission, which had its origins in Bundaberg in 1882. Like Mrs Robinson, Miss Florence Young, sister of the owners of the Fairymead plantation, was moved by the sight of hundreds of heathen about her. Possessing independent means, an unshakeable fundamentalist evangelical faith, relatives and friends of similar persuasion, and a singular opportunity to proselytize, Miss Young took upon herself the task of bringing the islanders of Bundaberg to Christ. Between 1882 and 1885 she conducted Bible reading classes, concentrating upon a few receptive Solomon Islanders at Fairymead. In 1885 the first convert was baptized, and the following year the QKM was established with a full time evangelist in its employ. Over the next two years the mission extended its work into other districts, and eventually eleven centres of instruction were established.

7 Smith 1892:10-11; Knox to McLean, 27 April 1892, CSRCA, Homebush Letter Book; Smart to Manager, 3 September 1900, Alexandra Plantation Letter Book; Mackay Mercury, 13 May 1893; 'Further Correspondence relating to Polynesian Labour in the Colony of Queensland', GBPP, LXX, 1895:159-60.
throughout the sugar belt. After ten years of
operation 1,325 islanders had been baptized and the
average weekly attendance at Sunday services and
evening classes was 2,217. By 1906 2,484 baptisms
had been recorded, the mission had a European staff
of nineteen, and 14,000 classes and services were
being held in the course of a year.

The QKM's message was simple: the Bible
was literally interpreted and islanders were urged
to 'open their hearts to Jesus'. The emphasis in
teaching was on expounding the relevance of the
lessons of the Bible to the life of the individual.
Some attention was paid to reading and writing, but
most stress was laid upon the new life in Jesus, and
the abandonment by the islanders of their old sins -
fighting, dancing, spirit-worshipping and cannibalism -
and the avoidance of the sins on display in Queensland -
swearing, drinking, and smoking. The extraordinary
success of the QKM was due primarily to the
satisfactions it offered to the islanders. Its
moral doctrines were stern, but in the activities
of the faithful there was a stress on 'enthusiasm'
which appealed to the Melanesians. Open-air hymn
singing sessions, and mass baptisms in the rivers
of the sugar towns drew large and appreciative
crowds. Miss Young remained the embodiment of the
mission, she often greeted new arrivals and farewelled
those who had been converted. Her fervour made a
great impression upon many islanders, and the memory
is still alive in the Solomons today of her coming down to the wharf, throwing her arms around her departing converts, and saying 'Now Jimmy, now Billy, no forget'im Jesus.'

For the islanders, membership of this mission helped to compensate for the distance from home and the absence of kin. Just as 'enthusiastic', usually Pentecostal, sects were successful in providing dispossessed and displaced people in other countries - such as the Negro slaves in the United States and some Aboriginal groups in Australia 8 - with a sense of 'belonging', so the QKM satisfied a similar need felt by many of the Melanesians in Queensland.

Furthermore, to imaginative and ambitious islanders, the QKM afforded a means of achieving prestige and a measure of authority among their fellows. The most promising converts were entrusted with responsibilities such as that of meeting new arrivals and setting them on the right path. In some cases islanders who had been won by the mission set up hymn singing and Bible reading classes on their own initiative. Men who showed themselves energetic in the faith and competent generally were designated teachers. Each teacher was provided with a certificate upon which his name, island, and date of baptism were

8 See Calley 1964.
inscribed; the teachers reported to a European member of the mission's staff each week, and the number of classes they had conducted was recorded on the certificate. To the teachers this record of their success was an object of much pride, and it conferred prestige upon them.  

The QKM enjoyed particular success among the Malaitans. Some, of course, rejected all overtures implacably, but there were more Malaitans among the mission's converts than people from any other island. More importantly, many of the Malaitans were so deeply affected by their contact with the mission that they chose to return to the island to work as missionaries (in some cases when they were eligible to stay permanently in Queensland) despite their knowledge of the opposition and dangers they would face. Although by no means a majority of the Melanesians absorbed sufficient from the religious instruction they received in Queensland to cause them

9 Between 1887 and 1896 the QKM published annual reports; from 1896 the mission's reports were published under the title, Not in Vain: What God hath wrought amongst the Kanakas in Queensland. The above discussion of the methods and activities of the QKM is based on these sources, a complete collection of which is in the Mitchell Library. Information is also drawn from Miss Florence Young's autobiographical account of her mission work, Young n.d., and Hilliard 1969.
to abandon their customary religious practices on their return, it was calculated in 1892 that about 75% of them came into some degree of contact with Christian teaching.¹⁰ This was probably true for the whole period from 1890 to 1906 when there were more Solomon Islanders in the colony than people from any other group.

Among those Melanesians in Queensland who were untouched or scarcely affected by the work of the missions, traditional religious practices and other customary observances seem, nevertheless, to have fallen temporarily into disobeyance. In the absence of the priests and sorcerers a suspension of observance, if not of belief, was likely. The Queensland experience did not destroy latent beliefs, however. Malaitans were disquieted in hospital when female nurses leaned over them - it was a serious breach of propriety among most of the people of Malaita for a woman to be physically 'above' a man - and similar instances of men being offended occurred aboard returning ships if women were permitted to go on deck when men were below. The custom observed in many parts of Malaita whereby women withdrew from the community during menstruation and before childbirth was impossible to maintain on the plantations, and the

¹⁰ Smith 1892:17.
islanders seem to have accepted this, although it did occasionally happen that men returning from the colonies, and almost in sight of their homes, were upset when woman gave birth aboard ship. Government agents were admonished not to allow pregnant women to recruit or to board returning vessels to prevent this situation arising.\textsuperscript{11} There is no evidence, however, of sorcery and other forms of magic being practised among the Melanesians in Queensland such as has been recorded about the immigrant labour compounds of the island plantations. Islanders continued to practice some of their customary arts—such as weapon-making and figure-carving—but informants deny that they devised spells or curses or gave much thought to the supernatural. One man explained this feasibly in terms of the local associations all aspects of Melanesian religion had. 'Queensland was a white man's country', he said, 'and the spirits weren't there.'

Fiji was not so obviously a white man's country, and the non-Christianized Melanesians found it easier to maintain their own religious outlook and observances, or at least a version of them. Solomon Island and Fijian religious practices and

\textsuperscript{11} Extract from log of the government agent of the \textit{Emprenza}, 2 December 1892, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 17 August 1896, QSA, GOV A 31; Molesworth 1917:89.
social customs were not dissimilar in some ways, and it seems that the immigrants found some of the Fijian cults and rituals meaningful and acceptable. They readily appreciated the **vagona** ceremony, and some returns from Fiji brought back with them a penchant for Fijian styles of dress, stone arrangement and house building the results of which can still be seen in Solomon Islands villages. There was probably considerable exchange between Melanesians and Fijians of myths and songs, although the contributions which each might have made to the stock of the other have not been studied. Ethnographic work in the Lau lagoon of Malaita, however, has revealed the existence of at

12 Village life in Fiji was not greatly dissimilar from that in the Solomons, and in both places there were cultural differences between 'bush' and 'beach' people. Fijian ceremonies, at which pigs were slaughtered, and marriages at which a bride price was paid, would have been appreciated by Solomon Islanders. As in the Solomons, socially ambitious men in Fiji demonstrated their influence by enlisting the aid of their kin in various projects - particularly house-building. On these points see Sahlins 1962:199, 299, 318-9; Belshaw 1964:128, 130, 169-70. Contact between Islanders and Aborigines in Queensland was slight and was discouraged by employers. Informants recall that Aborigines used to beg food from them, and the islanders generally held them in contempt. According to Thurnwald, the boomerang became a ceremonial instrument among the Buin people of Bougainville and among some New Hebrideans. Returned labourers were probably responsible for this, but a very superficial contact with Aborigines would have sufficed to acquaint islanders with the boomerang. Thurnwald 1932:560.
least one religious cult in the area which has Fijian and Lau elements intertwined.

To generalize about the 'colonial experience' of Solomon Island labour migrants is difficult. The nature of the 'mental baggage' with which they returned clearly differed according to the experiences they had had. It is safe to say, however, that few of the men who returned from Queensland and Fiji were dissatisfied with the treatment they had received. As has been pointed out, most of the Solomon Islanders who were recruited did so after reforms of all aspects of the labour trade had taken place. The brunt of the disadvantages of labour migration - poor living and working conditions, high rates of sickness and mortality, and a general indifference to the sensibilities of the Melanesians - had been borne by the New Hebrideans. But no man's experience abroad was quite like that of another. A man who had worked in Fiji on an isolated copra plantation for three years returned to the Solomons as pagan and unsophisticated as he had come. He had, perhaps, acquired a knowledge of Fijian language and custom, but little else. On the other hand, Solomon Islanders who had stayed in the Crown Colony beyond their first term resembled their Queensland counterparts. They could speak pidgin English, had attended church, and were likely to resist the 'levelling' forces which were strong in the islands.
The experiences of returns from Queensland differed according to the time they had spent in the colony and the places in which they had worked. The patronizing tolerance with which Melanesians were generally regarded was tempered in Bundaberg by a widely-felt concern for their souls. Those who had worked in Mackay had been regarded with a sense of misgiving by the Europeans due to the preponderance of islanders there, while those who had worked in the northern districts would, perhaps, have been conscious of the need for their services, and of the bargaining power which they could command after they had served their first term. Some Solomon Islanders left Queensland untouched by the concern which Mrs Robinson, Miss Young and others had felt for them, while others fulfilled the missionaries' hopes by leaving 'with Jesus in their hearts' after baptism by total immersion in the Burdekin river.
LOCAL LABOUR MIGRATION, 1870-1911

OTHER than those Solomon Islanders who travelled to Queensland and the Pacific island colonies, there were many who went to work for Europeans in places less far afield. From the 1870s onward the Solomon Islands were the scene of considerable trading activity. The group was frequently visited by bêche-de-mer and tortoise-shell collectors, by pearling vessels, and by ships sailing out of Sydney seeking cargoes of copra. Many islanders found employment aboard these ships as pilots, interpreters and boats’ crews. Most remained aboard for a short time only, giving their services for the time the vessel spent on a particular coast or in going around a single island, but some worked for longer periods, for the duration of a voyage through the group.

European settlement began on a small scale in the 1870s and provided further employment opportunities. John Stephens began trading on Savo in 1870; John MacDonald established a base at Santa Ana in 1874; Nixon and Perry did likewise in the
same year at Ugi and Makira Bay, respectively.\(^1\) Captain Haddock had a semi-permanent base at Maru Bay, San Cristobal in 1878, and by that year there were five European traders resident on the east coast of Guadalcanal.\(^2\) Most of these men were not trading on their own account, but were acting as agents for Sydney firms such as Cowlishaw Brothers, who employed ten ships in the Solomons trade, and MacArthur and Company whose chief agent, Nelson, set up a trading station on Savo in 1878.\(^3\) The largest operation was that of Captain Alexander Ferguson who was in partnership with Cowlishaw Brothers. Ferguson operated twelve stations in the Solomons which included, in 1877, one at Makira Bay, one in the Roviana lagoon, and others to the north in the Shortlands and on Bougainville. Ferguson's ships, the ninety ton schooner-rigged steamer Ripple, the ketch Esperanza, and a barque, became common sights to the islanders as they worked through the group trading for bêche-de-mer, shell, and copra.\(^4\)

In the 1880s interest in the produce of the

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1 Redlich 1874:31; Guppy 1887a:18, 35-7; Guppy 1887b:56, 132.

2 Fiji Times, 5 January 1878.

3 Fiji Times, 2 October 1878; Scarr 1967b:120.

4 Fiji Times, 6, 30 June 1877.
Solomons quickened. Bateman took up residence on Ugi in 1882, soon to be followed by Howard and Stephens, and in 1885 William MacDonald, brother of John MacDonald, who had moved to New Georgia, was trading in his brother's stead at Santa Ana. A trader named Birch was living at Narovo in the Roviana lagoon in the mid-1880s, and Harland established the largest shore station in the group at Nususonga in the same area. This station was the base for the operations of Kelly and Williams of Sydney who bought out Cowlishaw Brothers in 1881. The number of ships visiting the group which came, like the Elibank Castle in 1885, to collect copra, bêche-de-mer, tortoise-shell 'and anything else we could get from the natives', steadily increased through the decade.

The western islands were found to be the most rewarding trading centres, and the prospects for business and the manner in which it was conducted were well described by Commander Brooke in 1886:

The principal trade in the Solomons is copra, bêche-de-mer and pearls; and

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5 Brooke to Tryon, 15 January 1885, RNAS, XXIII; Marx to Tryon, 20 June 1885, ibid; Clayton to Tryon, 19 November 1885, ibid; Guppy 1887a:18; Scarr 1967b:120.

6 Deposition of Henry Charles Banks, chief officer, 'Elibank Castle', enclosed in Clayton to Tryon, 4 December 1885, RNAS, XXIII.
indeed the nature of the country is such that, unless it is cleared, there seems not much chance for anything else, though there are said to be some valuable woods. The ordinary system in this trade seems to be to collect copra from a number of different stations in a small sailing vessel and to store it at a depot such as Ugi or Rubiana. Another method is for a large schooner to sail through the islands, leaving at certain stations a store of 'trade' in the hands of a white trader (or sometimes of the native chief) for purposes of barter. When the vessel has exhausted her stores she begins her return voyage, picking up cargo at each station where she left 'trade' before till her load is complete.

THESE traders, who spent the greater part of the year on their ships and shore stations, employed islanders in many capacities - in the clearing of land, preparation of copra, as crew on their ships, and as domestic servants at their bases. Recruiting for this work was done in a less systematic and regulated fashion than recruiting for the colonies. Under the provisions of the Pacific Islanders Protection Act of 1872, governors of Australasian colonies were authorized to issue licenses to ships' masters to engage islanders for work on plantations within the group in which they were recruited. The Protection Act of 1875 gave the

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7  Brooke to Tryon, 3 July 1885, ibid.
governors authority to license traders to employ islanders in the business in which their vessel was engaged. Most of the islanders employed in the Solomons were engaged under the provisions of the latter Act although, since many of them worked ashore, the 1872 Act might have been the more appropriate authority.

The lack of supervision - limited to occasional inspection of traders' vessels and documents by naval officers - and the character of some of the traders, made local labour migration rather chancy for the islanders. The most common adverse experiences to which they were subject were three: extension by the employers of the term of service beyond the time agreed upon, unsatisfactory conditions aboard the ships, and failure on the part of the employers to return their hands to their homes or to places where they would be safe.

The difficulty, amounting to impossibility, of guaranteeing the protection of locally employed islanders, and the extent to which some traders exploited this, was demonstrated by the case of the trading schooner *Emma Fisher* which was seized at New Georgia in 1891 by Captain Davis of H.M.S. *Royalist*. The *Emma Fisher*, which was engaged in 'collecting copra, bêche-de-mer and island produce', was licensed in October 1891 to employ not more than twenty islanders for a period of three months at this work. The licence
was issued in Sydney to Thomas Woodhouse on the assumption that the vessel was then in Sydney and was bound for the Solomons. When Davis boarded the schooner he discovered that she had recruited forty-eight islanders. He also found that, although the licence was valid only for Woodhouse, one Robert Cable was master of the ship, and that the *Emma Fisher* had in fact been in the Solomons at the time when the licence was taken out.

Working at Nususonga were seven islanders - four Malaitans, two from San Cristobal, and one from Ugi - who had been recruited by the *Emma Fisher* and whose terms of service had long expired. Inspection of the vessel's log showed that there were no entries at all between 2 June 1890 and 6 July 1891, and it was therefore impossible to tell how many men had been recruited over this period. There was no statement, either, about deaths of employees, although strong suspicions were entertained that some deaths had occurred. Three extracts from the ship's log were brought before the court of enquiry into the case as evidence of the illegality of the ship's proceedings:

August 9th, 1888, 'Jeamy, Treasury boy deserted but was obliged to return this evening, having caught an Aru boy and kept as hostage, which plan proved very effectual.'

September 29th, 1888, 'Canoe put off and got us put into Aru where the 3 boys we had recruited on the other side were decoyed away on their going ashore in our
boat. We captured 2 men and put them in irons as hostages. Aru boys had not been brought back; anchor watch kept.' September 30th, 1888, 'Got under way at 7 a.m. and cruised about, canoes coming to us at times to try and buy off the hostages, which was effected at 3.30 p.m., on payment of dog's teeth.'

The Solomons, like other places in the Pacific, attracted men whose quirks of character or outright insanity, made them bad employers. Two such men were Henry Townshend and Peter Sorenson. Townshend was a homosexual who had been harried out of Fiji and other Pacific territories, and was eventually killed at Ugi after being responsible for the death of a young islander in his employ. Sorenson had a long and turbulent career in the Pacific, and served a term in Brisbane gaol for offences against the shipping Acts. One of the many incidents in which he was involved demonstrated the risks islanders ran when they came into association with employers whose conduct was unsupervised and whose tempers were uncertain. In 1884 Sorenson signed on as crew seven

8 See correspondence with reference to this case, a copy of the Emma Fisher's licence, and a printed report by the Crown Solicitor to the High Commissioner, dated 29 February 1892, in RNAS, XXXVIII.

9 Hogblore to Commander-in-Chief, 9 June 1878, RNAS, XIII; Gorrie to Commander-in-Chief, 27 August 1878, ibid.
men from San Cristobal who were encouraged to engage by Sono, or 'Johnson', the chief of Hada Bay. Provoked by Sorenson's erratic and violent behaviour, the seven natives of San Cristobal and some other crew members deserted his ship at Ulawa, and made their way in the ship's boat to New Britain. Sorenson sailed to New Britain but the deserters refused to rejoin him and were supported in their stand by a German official. What had begun as a short engagement for the course of a voyage through the Solomons eventually took the San Cristobal men much further afield than they had anticipated; one man remained in New Britain, three took ship for Sydney aboard a trading vessel, and the other three made their way back to their homes after serving aboard ships of the Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft and visiting Samoa. 10

As a rule the regular traders saw that it was in their interest to establish good relations with the islanders and most did so. Ferguson, in particular, was in good standing with the people of the northern islands and enjoyed the confidence and support of

10 Clayton to Tryon, 30 October 1886, RNAS, XXXVIII; Tryon to Assistant High Commissioner, 1 November 1886, ibid; Statement of Peter Sorenson, enclosed in Governor of Queensland to Tryon, 21 March 1887, ibid; High Commissioner to Imperial German Commissioner, New Guinea, 14 May 1887, ibid; Thurston to Commander-in-Chief, 4 June 1888, ibid.
Gorai, the influential chief of the Shortlands. There were, however, exceptions; Haddock, for example, earned an unenviable reputation as an employer. In 1881 the government agent of the Fiji recruiter Flirt was informed by the people on the north-west coast of Guadalcanal that Haddock had assaulted two men in an argument over the price to be paid for copra. More seriously, he had caused the deaths of three islanders whom he had employed as boat's crew, by landing them, not at their homes, but in hostile territory along the coast where they were killed. The islanders were not without means of redress. The motives of the men who attacked trading ships such as the Lavinia in Mboi passage in 1872, the James Birnie at Ontong Java in 1875, and the Star of Fiji, attacked at Gela in 1876, were probably mixed, but it is likely that failure of traders to keep faith with casual employees played

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11 Ferguson was killed in 1880 when the Ripple was attacked at Numa Numa, a village on the east coast of Bougainville. Gorai avenged Ferguson by taking reprisals against the people of Numa Numa. Guppy 1887a:21. When Woodford visited the Shortlands in 1886 he found there fond memories of Ferguson, symbolized by the fact that one of Gorai's 'subjects' bore the Captain's name. Woodford 'Diary', 14, 16 July 1886. See also, on Ferguson's relations with the islanders, Statement of Thomas Davis, mate of the steam ship 'Ripple', enclosed in Wilson to High Commissioner, 8 October 1880, CO 225/5.

12 Journal of H.A. Mair, Flirt, 30 September 1880.
THE *Emma Fisher* case, and those involving Sorenson, Townshend and Haddock, were exceptional, and they relate to difficulties traders experienced in retaining and making best use of their employees rather than to difficulties in securing them. As in colonial recruiting, it was neither necessary nor possible for the traders to acquire their hands by force. For a variety of reasons islanders were eager to join the crews of trading vessels and to work at the shore stations. Traders paid their employees in the usual highly desirable goods and some, in defiance of the international agreement of 1884, gave firearms and ammunition to long-term workers. A great many islanders, however, chose to work for short periods, varying from a few weeks to a few months. They often stayed aboard ship for the duration of a round voyage - such as described by Brooke - from and back to their homes. These voyages seem to have been highly attractive. They provided, in the first place, opportunities to those who were curious about islands and people other than their own, to travel further afield and in greater safety than they could otherwise have done. As well as being satisfying to curiosity, travel was prestigious and a welcome break from ordinary routines.

13 *Fiji Times*, 24 August 1872; 17 February 1875, 26 July 1886.
There were other reasons for the appeal of a term aboard a trading schooner. The length of time occupied by such a voyage was often just right to allow difficulties at home - often occasioned by disputes over women - to die down. Sometimes men joined the ships at the behest of the leader of their community in order to spy on the trader or people elsewhere, or to deliver and collect messages and information. Crew members of trading ships could serve their own interests as well. Distinctive products of particular islands, or parts of islands - shell money and ornaments, combs, shields, spears and charms - were in demand in other areas. Men working aboard the ships who carried stocks of these goods had excellent opportunities to trade on their own account in an expanded market, so much so that one observer remarked of them: 'they probably make a good deal more by their private barter than they receive in wages'.

UNLIKE those who ventured overseas, the people who recruited for work within the Solomons were not subject to sudden changes in diet and climate, and were not obliged to live in close association

14 Woodford 'Diary', 21 October 1888; Rason to Commander-in-Chief, 21 December 1895, RNAS, (see footnote 4, Ch. 4 for the location of this letter).
with many other people with consequent hazards to health. They did, however, run risks. Most of the islanders who worked for the traders did so on and around islands other than their own. No trading stations were established on Malaita, for example, and Malaitans, observably the best workers, were to be found spread throughout the group on trading ships and at the important trading centres like Ugi, Nususonga and Marau Sound. In general, men employed in their own localities, subject to the demands of their kin and to their obligations within the traditional order, were inconstant. It was also found that men employed close to their homes were apt to steal from their employers and to abandon their employment when they felt inclined to do so. Freed from these ties and temptations, the islanders were more reliable and tended to identify their interests with those of their employers.¹⁵ They faced dangers, however, particularly around the western islands where heads were frequently required for ceremonial purposes and alien islanders were regarded as ideal victims.

In addition, people were often tempted by

¹⁵ Thurston to C.O., 16 March 1892, CO 225/38; Log of the schooner Narovo, 14 August 1894, Central Archives of Fiji and the WPHC, Suva.
the stores of trade goods carried by the small cutters which seemed very vulnerable, when manned perhaps by only the European and a crew of islanders who were likely to be despised at the foreign places they visited. On occasion, islanders near whose homes the trading stations were situated sought heads or had a disagreement with the trader and killed him, his employees, or both. This happened at Nususonga in 1889 when three islanders employed by Woodhouse were killed by local people. Two Malaitans employed by Peter Pratt Edmunds at his station in the Roviana lagoon were killed in the same year. 16 Attacks upon the trading vessels Esperanza, Ripple, and Zephyr in 1880, upon the Elibank Castle and Savo in 1884, and upon the Freak in 1891, resulted in numbers of employed islanders being killed. 17

Life for the European traders was equally

16 Hand to Commander-in-Chief, 10 July 1889, RNAS, XXXVIII; Hand to Commander-in-Chief, 5 November 1889, ibid; Sydney Morning Herald, 20 March 1889.

17 Ferguson to Wilson, 1 August 1880, RNAS, XV; Izat to Wilson, 18 August 1880, ibid; Clayton to Tryon, 4 December 1885, RNAS, XXIII; Hand to Commander-in-Chief, 10 July, RNAS, XXXVIII; Tucker to Messrs Kelly and Williams, 13 July 1889, enclosed in Kelly and Williams to Commander-in-Chief, n.d., ibid; Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 29 August 1891, ibid.
precarious. Swartz of the trading schooner Leslie was killed in the Russell Islands in 1881; Cooper, an agent at Santa Ana of Kelly and Williams, and the brothers Dabelle - one at Roviana, the other at Yanuta - were killed in 1889. In 1891 Howard of Ugi was murdered by a party of Malaitans who seemed to have been acting for some aggrieved Ugi people, and Craig was killed at Makira Bay. The next year Nyberg was killed at Santa Ana for his teasing of the islanders and haggling with them over the price of copra. 18 As a consequence of these dangers the nerves of employers were often frayed, and the delicacy of the situation when a European of uncertain temper was placed in charge of islanders from different places was shown in 1894 when the Malaitans aboard the schooner Narovo, which was trading from Sydney to the Solomons, rose and killed the captain, mate, and two of the Melanesian crew. A Gela man who was present deposed:

18 Robertson to Wilson, 22 March 1881, RNAS, XVI; Extract from the log of the 'Sandfly', enclosed in Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 10 October 1891, RNAS, XXXVIII; Pelly to Senior Officer, New Guinea, 27 April 1889, ibid; Fairfax to Secretary of the Admiralty, 4 September 1889, CO 225/31; Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 10 December 1891, RNAS, XXXVIII; Kelham to Commander-in-Chief, 1 September 1892, ibid; Goodrich to Commander-in-Chief, 26 May 1894, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 145/1894.
I said to the Mala men why have you killed the Captain. They said because he has beaten us often, and because one died from sickness, and now we have killed him, and if you tell of us we will kill you.19

Employment aboard trading ships and at the shore stations disturbed the islanders who engaged in it, and the communities from which they were drawn, less than did labour migration to far distant places. The periods for which men were engaged were shorter and, although there were exceptions, their eventual return was more assured. Indeed at some times and places the islanders indicated that they preferred to work for traders than to sign on with the colonial recruiters, and some leaders, like Bera of Thousand Ships Bay, Ysabel, were of like mind.20 The patterns of behaviour common to men who returned from Queensland and Fiji, their independence, unwillingness to settle back to their old routines, and their questioning of the authority of established leaders, were less common among men whose travels had not been so extensive and who had associated mainly with people of their own kind in more or less familiar contexts.

The overall effect of the traders' activities was however, ambiguous: on the one hand their impact upon

19 Log of the schooner Narovo, 2-3 April 1894.
20 Wawn 1893:219; Scarr 1967a:15.
the traditional order was less profound in the Solomons than elsewhere because they took up very little land; in other ways they provoked far-reaching changes. Their extensive dealings in the island currencies of dog, shark and porpoise-teeth, caused inflation in these currencies, and prompted the movement, which became general, eventually, to allot equivalent values in native money to European goods. In this way trade goods became integral to the indigenous economy and ceased to have merely utilitarian and novelty value. The preparation of copra, particularly in cases such as that of the people of Ifata Bay, San Cristobal, who possessed a ship's boat and made expeditions trading for copra themselves, must have caused changes in individual and community priorities and routines. One of the most important consequences of the presence of traders - and their concentration in the west of the group - was to give a stimulus to head-hunting. It was a constant complaint of naval officers, visitors, and traders who observed the law, that some traders supplied rifles and ammunition

21 See letter from Woodford to Thurston dated November 1886, copied in 'Diary', 10 November 1886; Age, 10 November 1894; Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 292/1896.

22 Journal of R.J.C. Ferguson, Jessie Kelly, 17 September 1882.
Waterhouse and Company. Because trading was conducted on a comparatively small scale until the end of the century, local employment never presented itself as a serious alternative to recruiting for work overseas, and the Solomons remained for the colonial recruiters virtually an open field.

IN the late 1890s began a new phase in the economic development of the Solomon Islands. In 1896 there were about fifty Europeans resident in the group. Most of these were traders operating in the established fashion, collecting copra and other produce at shore stations and shipping it to Sydney by steamer. Burns, Philp and Co. Ltd entered the Solomons and provided a regular six-weekly steamer service to the group on which copra was collected at six or seven stations on behalf of the company, and elsewhere for other traders. There were more Europeans present, like Captain Wilson who spent the greater part of each year diving and trading for pearl shell in Manning Strait and at Port Praslin, but

26 Scarr 1967b:120.

27 Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 292/1896.

the beginnings made by Frank Wickham and Norman Wheatley at New Georgia, and by Olaf Svenson at Marau Sound, represented a new departure.

Svenson had been trading in the group since the early 1890s, and by 1896, in partnership with Nerdrum, he had acquired land on the mainland of Guadalcanal and had begun planting. Svenson and Nerdrum acquired more land in the following years and their enterprise - the Marau Company - prospered until more formidable capitalists entered the field. Wickham and Wheatley, similarly, had developed from traders into planters and they and Svenson turned to Malaita in particular for the extra and long-term labour they now required.29

The end of the Queensland labour trade coincided with rapid expansion in local planting. In 1905 Levers' Pacific Plantations Ltd took over the land originally allotted to the Pacific Islands Company. In the same year Levers bought from Svenson much of the land he had leased and, by 1907, the company had leased almost 90,000 acres in the Solomons,

29 Woodford to Thurston, 26 June, 5 July 1896, WPHC. Inward Correspondence, General, 292/1896; Woodford to High Commissioner, 27 January 1898, ibid, 84/1898; 'Account of prospecting voyages for pearl shell in New Guinea and the Solomons', MS, Papers of Captain William Hamilton, Oxley Library, Brisbane.
and had planted on 4,000 acres in New Georgia, Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands. A newspaper correspondent who visited the group in 1907 listed twelve planters other than the agents of Levers. Although coconut planting was the basic activity, and there were about 12,000 acres given over to this at the time, some of the smaller planters were experimenting with rubber, bananas and other fruits. But that the future was thought to lie with coconuts and large plantations was demonstrated by the entry of Darbyshire and Harding and the British Solomons Proprietary Company which leased extensive areas on Guadalcanal, and by the establishment in 1909 of the Malayata Company - a subsidiary of the Queensland Fairymead Sugar Company - which was the first enterprise to take up land on Malaita for planting.  

Woodford had arrived in the Solomons armed with powers to supervise and control local labour recruiting under the provisions of the Solomons (Labour) Regulation, 1897. No longer were employers of labour within the group able to take out New South Wales licences by proxy. Instead a licence could be

30 Extract from Under Secretary's Diary, Entry no. 925, 9 January 1906 (Confidential), QSA, PRE 84; Queensland, 12 January 1907; Pacific Islands Geographical Handbook, III, 1944:628-9, 656.
issued only by the High Commissioner on the recommendation of the Resident Commissioner or, in special circumstances, by officers authorized to do so by the latter. Every employer was obliged to provide the Resident Commissioner with a three-monthly report on the circumstances of each man in his employ. Men could not be engaged for longer than two years, wages were to be paid in cash, and provision was made for the unannounced inspection of ships and plantations by the Resident Commissioner or his deputies. Inspecting officers were empowered to cancel engagements and direct employers to return labourers to their homes if they found fault with the conditions of employment. Particular stress was laid in the Regulations on the employers' obligation to provide a free passage home to each labourer on the expiry of his term. 31

In 1907 there were about 1,200 islanders employed on plantations in the group. 32

31 A copy of the Regulation is enclosed in the files of the Queensland Premier's office, QSA, PRE 84.

32 A visitor to the group in this year reported that Levers employed 650 labourers on their various estates. According to Woodford, other planters in the group combined employed almost as many islanders as Levers. Queenslander, 12 January 1907; Woodford to High Commissioner, 16 February 1907, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 136/1904.
recruiting for these plantations was carried on very much as in the colonial labour trades. Each company possessed a vessel or vessels which were despatched as occasion required to recruit labour at wages roughly equal to those paid in Fiji. Known evidence about the conduct of local recruiting is sparse, being limited in fact to the logs of five recruiting voyages made by William Hamilton for his Guadalcanal plantation, a log of the trading vessel Federal, and reports on voyages which came in for investigation by naval officers and the Resident Commissioner. The indications in these logs and this correspondence, however, are that, like the colonial recruiters, those engaging men for work on island plantations dealt through influential islanders like Kwaisuila, Sono, and Kona of Coleridge Bay, Malaita, and gave a present for each recruit. Although wages were low, the recruiters enjoyed success probably because they were prepared to accept very young, albeit eager, men at reduced rates of pay, and because the term of service was shorter than for work overseas - in some instances recruits were accepted at their own stipulation that they would engage for one year only. The recruiters experienced some success with the salt-water people once the Queensland trade - from which they had indirectly profited - had ended. As the colonial recruiters had discovered earlier, the coastal men haggled over wages and extra benefits
more than the less sophisticated bushmen. 33

For the most part the local labour trade proceeded according to the regulations and there were few infringements of the law or offences offered to the islanders. When cases of dissatisfaction with recruiting did arise they were usually due to the anxiety of young people to recruit in defiance of the wishes of their elders, and to a tendency of the representatives of companies with large interests in the group to be overbearing. In 1909 the schooner Ruby, recruiting for Levers' plantations in the Russell Islands, took aboard two single girls from Sulu Fou who were then entered on the vessel's recruiting list as being 'married' to two recruits secured earlier and elsewhere. Protests from the People of Sulu Fou, which seem to have been directed primarily at the arranged marriages, brought the matter to the attention of Barnett, the Acting Resident Commissioner. Barnett suspended Levers'

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33 Support for these points can be found in entries in the logs of Hamilton's vessels the Canomie, Ysabel, Gazelle, Nipon and Kamlun; the logs span the period 1 January 1903 to 14 November 1905, but it is not always clear which vessel the entries refer to, see especially entries for 31 October, 8, 10, 11 November 1905. See also log of the lugger Nipon, 1-2 May 1901, Hamilton Papers, and 'Log book of the "Federal"...', 6 July 1912, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
recruiting licence and called in the company's bond. He also dismissed Levers' protest at the impediment to business caused by the labour regulations, and, although he remarked on the readiness of young women to fall in with the recruiters' designs, he commented also on the inducements Levers held out to their recruiters to secure a full ship whatever the cost:

I may mention that this way of getting women recruits was not uncommon as young girls are often anxious to leave their village; further it is the custom to pay masters of recruiting vessels a per capita bonus on all recruits engaged, a practice which I consider most undesirable.34

The experience the islanders had on plantations varied according to the location of the estates and the tempers of the overseers. Malaita men employed at Marau Sound were inclined to be fractious and unsettled because of the presence of large numbers of independent spirited Malaitans who visited the area. Svenson had trouble with Malaitan employees periodically; on one occasion a group of Malaitans absconded in a stolen boat with firearms and other items belonging to the plantation.35 When employed at a distance from their homes however, the islanders were found to be reliable.

34 Barnett to High Commissioner, 23 April 1909, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 517/1909.
35 Woodford to Thurston, 26 June 1896, ibid, 292/1896.
It was a complaint of informants who had worked on plantations in the group in this period that they had received rough treatment at the hands of overseers. Some recalled being forbidden to straighten up and rest briefly from their work and being bullied in other ways by the 'drivers'. Certainly Levers had among their employees men of insensitive and authoritarian disposition, such as Charles Peter Munster and C.B. Benham, whose ill-treatment of the islanders in their charge eventually led to their expulsion from the Protectorate. According to Thomas Elkington, the overseers' treatment of labourers was often severe but the latter were not without means of rough redress:

You had some very strong people on some of the plantations. Real 'He' men. There were no two-ways about that, and they needed to be, but generally speaking I must say that occasionally I think the soft boot in the behind was used quite often, which they sometimes used to laugh about it, but other times they used to take exception. If they thought they were being hard done by and they didn't think it justified, there would be a gang up and sure enough the plantation manager would find himself in the sea.

The Malaitans ill-treated by Benham when he was employed by Svenson at Aola, Guadalcanal, displayed


37 'Notes of an interview with Mr T. Elkington...'.

this sort of independence. 'In consequence of his
treatment of the natives under his charge', Woodford
wrote, 'they on one occasion seized him and threw
him on the ground and chastised him with the mid-ribs
of coconut leaves.' Woodford also noted that similar
antagonism was aroused by Benham when he was in Levers'
employ:

I am informed that during the short time
of Benham's employment at Lunga, in charge
of a gang of Mala men, his treatment of
them was such that they openly declared
their intention of killing him.38

The spirit displayed by these disgruntled
employees, particularly Malaitans, was partly the
product of earlier overseas experience. In the years
after 1904 many of the men who had been to Queensland
and Fiji recruited for work on plantations within
the group. At this point the histories of colonial
and local labour migration intersect. Local
employment provided an alternative to an immediate
return to the old life for many of the returns
and 'repatriates' from plantations overseas.

38 Woodford to High Commissioner, 19 June 1906,
WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 74/1906.
'RETURNS' should be distinguished from those people who were deported from Queensland after 1904 in accordance with Federal immigration legislation of 1901. The returns accepted the free passage home which was guaranteed to all who recruited for work in Queensland and the Pacific island colonies.¹ The Melanesians who were deported from Queensland are, perhaps, best called 'repatriates': they encountered different circumstances in the islands from those who had gone back earlier. The option of re-engaging for work in the Australian colony was not open to them; most of them had been in Queensland for many years - some had been born there - and their deportation aroused confusion and hostility in the minds of many of them. Their character and numbers made their return over the years 1904-08 particularly important to the subsequent history of

¹ The first vessel to return Solomon Islanders from Queensland was the Lytton which left Brisbane on 8 May 1874 with two returns for Guadalcanal aboard. 'Register of the arrival of vessels...'. The first Solomon Islanders to be returned from Fiji were thirty-one men who had survived the massacre aboard the Carl, and were returned in H.M.S. Dido in 1873. Report of W. Chapman, 10 November 1873, GBPP XLV, 1874:64.
of the Solomons. The repatriates, therefore, faced the consequences of the closing of the colonial labour trade; the returns were the products of its flourishing years.

SOME of the men who returned from Fiji aboard the Christine in 1886 had four boxes of trade goods. The boxes contained knives, axes, tobacco, matches, mirrors, clothing, and cloth. These returns also possessed hurricane lamps, cases of kerosene, pineapple plants and dogs. These goods were vital to the reception and future of a returning labourer, and they, no less than their owners' newly acquired habits and attitudes, had important social, political and cultural effects in the islands.

Until 1884 the returns' most prized possessions had been their firearms: it was usual for each man to carry back to his island at least one musket or rifle and a quantity of ammunition. After 1884 only returns from Samoa and New Caledonia could openly land with firearms and ammunition, but, for as long as the Fiji and Queensland labour trades continued, returns attempted, often successfully, to smuggle them aboard the ships. Despite the rigorous search that was made of all labour vessels clearing Queensland and Fiji ports, many firearms went undetected. Customs

2 Woodford 'Diary', 17 April 1886.
and Immigration Department officers were conscious when they discovered firearms and ammunition — as they did for instance aboard the Foam in 1892, the Sybil in 1897, and the Roderick Dhu in 1899 — that other caches escaped their notice. Woodford, as Resident Commissioner in the Solomons, was acutely aware of the part played by the visits of the recruiting ships in the arming of the islanders. 'I am informed', he wrote to the High Commissioner in 1897, 'that over fifty rifles were landed last year on Malaita from one labour ship, of course concealed in the boys' boxes.' According to informants, 'everybody' tried to bring back rifles which they attempted to conceal in all parts of the ship, in women's clothes, and especially in false bottoms and lids which were built into the trade boxes for this purpose.

The importance of firearms to the islanders is indicated by the degree of risk they ran in attempting to smuggle them aboard ship. In the 1890s

3 Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, telegrams sent 1892-1901, telegrams of 7 October 1892, QSA 27/317, 30 April 1897, ibid, 27/318, 4 December 1899, ibid, 27/319; memorandum to Sub-Collectors of Customs, 13 January 1903, QCSO, 7871/1903.

4 Woodford to Berkeley, 7 August 1897, CO 225/52. It was also possible for returns to bring back their wages in cash and buy arms and ammunition from traders in the islands.
a Snider rifle cost about £5 and, since firearms discovered in the customs search were confiscated or unceremoniously thrown into the harbour and no compensation paid, men who tried to smuggle them back from Queensland risked the loss of almost a year's wages; Fiji returns who attempted it stood to lose an even greater proportion of their earnings. Speaking of the men of Malaita, Ivens observed, 'Their test of being a man was the possession of a rifle.'\(^5\) A man who returned home with a rifle was assured of respect whatever his standing within the traditional order might have been. This was of great importance to those who had been absent from their communities, and from the manoeuvres by which reputations and social success were gained, for a considerable time. In such cases the rifle's practical use was a secondary consideration, although it was certainly of importance as a means of self-defence in a feud-ridden society where potential enemies were many.

Men who returned with firearms were also likely to be welcomed because their presence increased the power of the community to which they belonged. The introduction of firearms on a large scale via the labour trade probably stimulated hostilities between groups and caused a rise in the casualties occasioned

\(^5\) Ivens 1918:227.
by such conflicts. Certainly, better armed groups came to dominate neighbouring people who did not have access to the supply of firearms. Kwaisulia's superior firepower enabled him and his allies from Ada Gege and Sulu Fou to dominate the people of the Lau lagoon and further south to Uru, the rewards for this control being a monopoly on the profitable business of supplying expiatory human sacrifices, control of fishing grounds, and the acquisition of garden land on the mainland of Malaita. The growth of Kwaisulia's power, in turn, was checked when the armaments of the people of Manaoba became superior — through their contacts with vessels recruiting labour for Samoa — to his own. In similar fashion the people of the La-la-soo district in the Maramasike Passage, who possessed more than a hundred rifles and muskets, became known as the 'pirates' of the area. They were, according to Captain Davis, 'a terror to all the tribes for miles around'. The balance of power was affected by the importation of rifles on islands other than Malaita. In 1889 the bushmen above

6 See above p. 151.

7 Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 6 August 1891, RNAS, XXXVIII.
the Maniwowo passage of San Cristobal - led by a man named Punghahow, who struck the blow which killed Bevan, government agent of the *Saucy Lass* - were well armed as a result of a number of the men having been to Samoa. These people had become overbearing; 'they raid and are the terror of the people around', reported a naval officer who secured the ready cooperation of other people on San Cristobal in his efforts to capture Punghahow. 8

The effect which firearms introduced through the labour trade could have upon the power structure of an area was dramatically demonstrated by the Savoese. Many men from this island went to Queensland and Fiji in the early days of labour migration when firearms were readily available. They had almost ceased to recruit by the mid-1880s, but by then, through their superior weapons, they had earned the dread of the inhabitants of the north-central and north-west coasts of Guadalcanal. Raiding these coasts at will and taking many heads, the well-armed Savoese became the most formidable people in the central Solomons, so much so that John Gaggin believed that traders who carried them aboard their ships

8 Mann to Fairfax, 18 October 1888, enclosed in Fairfax to Thurston, 27 January 1889, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 29/1889.
would be safe from attack by other islanders.\textsuperscript{9}

Although the introduction of muskets and rifles had the most dramatic consequences for the fortunes of some individuals and groups, the vast quantities of trade goods had more general significance. In most cases the returns distributed the contents of their boxes to their relations, particularly to their fathers and brothers. By so doing they were able to compensate for any losses their kin might have suffered through their absence. There were exceptions, however, to this general practice; it was common in communities which recognized the authority of hereditary chiefs for these dignitaries to take a share of each return's goods. The complaisance shown to recruiting by these leaders is, therefore, easily explained. 'In Sa'a', Ivens observed, 'a return was not allowed to open his box until the chief gave him permission; then so much was stipulated as the chief's share and had to be given before any apportioning was done. In one case the chief claimed the boxes after they were emptied.'\textsuperscript{10}

By the 1890s trade goods had been allotted

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equivalents in native currencies, and it was possible for returned labourers to exchange the goods they brought back for shell money and porpoise, dog and shark-teeth to be used in bride price exchanges and to make other customary payments. Ivens denied that trade goods could be used directly in traditional exchanges, but informants insisted that this was not so, and that a rifle, in particular, was often acceptable as part of a bride-price payment. Probably there were no hard and fast rules in this matter, and the acceptability of goods other than shell money and valuable teeth depended upon the attitude of the prospective bride's kin.

Europeans who knew that the returns' trade goods were quickly disposed of deplored the fact, and assumed that the islanders therefore derived little personal benefit from their labour. This seems to have been a mistaken assumption, however, for, even when the goods were not deployed to achieve some definite end, such as the acquisition of a wife, they were used to secure and confirm the support of kin, and to discharge obligations. These were acts upon which an individual's social and economic success depended. For this reason returns dreaded to land empty-handed. This could happen if they had been forced to live on their capital while awaiting the arrival of a ship, or if they had suffered gambling losses. It was a constant fear of returning bushmen that they might be plundered by the
rapacious coastal people. In any of these events, the future of a return among his people was jeopardized, and men who found themselves in this situation were often reluctant to leave the ship, or concocted stories of being defrauded by the Europeans in order to account for their poverty. 11

The effects of the integration of European goods into the island systems of exchange are difficult to gauge. According to a missionary with long experience of the Solomons, there was a steady rise in the bride price - paid in tafuli'ae - on Malaita through the last three decades of the nineteenth century. His informants attributed this to a general increase in wealth as a result of the improved garden productivity which was made possible by the introduction of steel tools by returning labourers. 12 It is possible, however, that the inflation in bride price was also related to the admission of European goods, directly and indirectly, into the system. Shell money industries on San Cristobal and Guadalcanal declined and eventually became defunct in the same period. 13 No cause has been assigned to this, but, again, it may be that

11 Woodford 'Diary', 27 May 1886; Argus, 15 December 1892.


13 Woodford 1908:83.
the importation of large quantities of negotiable European goods contributed.

Of the other goods brought back by returning labourers tobacco was probably the most important. Its adoption by the old and young of both sexes made the islanders dependent upon Europeans - recruiters, traders and missionaries - for its continued supply. New strains of bananas, pineapples and other fruits were brought to the Solomon Islands by labourers returning from overseas. Dogs, brought in great numbers for pig-hunting from Queensland, quickly inter-bred with, and eventually replaced, the native dog of the Solomons. Other imports had unfortunate consequences: according to Codrington, men returning from Queensland brought arsenic with them which had the effect of making certain practices of sorcerers really dangerous, whereas previously they had worked only erratically by suggestion.14

Many of the returns had benefited in physique and health from their terms abroad. Speaking of men who had worked in Queensland, the manager of a Geraldton plantation observed, 'you can tell at once they are old hands because they have more the

appearance of the sturdy Britisher'. Informants in the Solomons confirmed that many people returned from the colonies in improved physical condition. In part this may have been due to the natural maturing of young men through their late teens and early twenties, but regular manual labour and the high protein content of the plantation diet probably contributed. The impression that men were in a better state of health on their return was to a great extent conveyed by their being free of the scurvy skin disease which afflicted so many islanders. The Kwaio recruiting story includes a reference to this point.


There were important exceptions to this however; considerable numbers of people returned to the Solomons in very poor health or physically incapacitated by blindness and injuries. In the

16 See list of returns enclosed in journal of R. Haddock, Marion Rennie, 24 June–28 December 1877; journal of C. Rebman, Dauntless, 6 December 1879; journal of F.P. Bevan, Surprise, 27 July 1882; 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'. 
1890s returns aboard all labour vessels leaving Queensland were inspected by a doctor. Islanders suffering from diseases such as leprosy and contagious lung and venereal ailments were, in theory, to be detained in the colony for treatment. Nevertheless, some lepers were returned along with others suffering from contagious diseases. On eleven voyages in 1896, for example, nineteen islanders with tuberculosis were returned, two returns had phthisis, and two had gonorrhoea or syphilis. There were others whose ailments were listed as 'general debility' and 'dropsy', which names could conceal various diseases. Medical officers were instructed to hold back people 'to whom the voyage is not likely to be beneficial', but, probably because this vague instruction was variously interpreted, death rates at sea among returns were higher than among recruits. No comprehensive figures are available for any colony, but the surviving records - especially the government agents' journals - indicate that this was so. Further support is given by figures compiled on the point by the Queensland Immigration Department. Between 1 January 1902 and 19 October 1903, there were sixty deaths of 'Native Passengers' aboard labour ships. Phthisis and dysentery accounted for most of the deaths of which eighteen were of recruits and forty-two
of returns.\textsuperscript{17}

Codrington believed that returning labourers were responsible for the spread of venereal disease in the Solomons on all islands except San Cristobal, where the crews of whaling ships had, earlier, been responsible.\textsuperscript{18} Dr Welchman, Anglican missionary on Ysabel from 1890 to 1906, was of the same opinion.

Many men are returned to their homes in a diseased condition, and sometimes with infectious diseases.... Men have been landed to their deaths, when a few weeks of treatment would have returned them to health. Others have been landed with syphilis and gonorrhoea which was promptly communicated to their wives and other natives.

Welchman claimed to have several venereal cases of this origin under his care at the time of writing, and also to be able to trace to the arrival of labour vessels outbreaks of influenza and whooping

\textsuperscript{17} Return of numbers and causes of Deaths of Native Passengers that have occurred upon Queensland Labour ships since the beginning of the year 1902, dated 19 October 1903, QSA, GOV A 36; medical certificate for the William Manson, clearing for the Solomon Islands, 23 April 1894, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 11 May 1894, ibid, GOV A 26; certificate for the Rio Loge, 25 May 1904, enclosed in Chief Secretary to Governor, 14 June 1894, ibid; Galloway to Under Colonial Secretary, 6 June 1893, enclosed in Norman to Ripon, 26 July 1893, GBPP, LXX, 1895:14.

\textsuperscript{18} Guppy 1887a:176-7; Codrington 1891:12.
cough - the latter, he said, had decimated a district on Ysabel. 19

Of what was typical in these matters - the health of returns and the uses to which they put their goods - the European observers knew little, and the word of informants that most men returned improved in health and distributed their goods calculatingly among their kin must be accepted. Many returns, however, made efforts to continue their association with Europeans, and a discussion of their behaviour may draw upon written records as well as oral evidence.

RETURNED labourers worked as boats' crews, guides and interpreters for the Europeans - recruiters, traders and missionaries - who came to the islands. These men made a better adjustment to living, in a sense between the two cultures with which they were now acquainted, than did the returns who continually re-engaged or worked permanently aboard the recruiting ships. To most Europeans, however, they were objects of repulsion. Woodford, writing of Queensland returns whom he encountered in the Solomons in 1888, gave them a bad character.

19 Welchman to Chamberlain, 2 September 1903, enclosed in Woodford to High Commissioner, 10 September 1903, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 153/1903.
These English speaking boys...will come on board a strange ship in most parts of the group and generally prefacing their remarks with a piece of ear-scorching blasphemy, will proceed to tell you that they are 'all same white man', that the other boys are no good, and that very good you give me tobacco.20

Woodford's reaction was a common one: it was widely felt that the islanders who had spent time in Queensland had become in some sense 'spoilt', and had lost the traits of character which were natural to them. Woodford was less patronizing than most in simply finding the acculturated islanders personally objectionable; others made it clear that it was the loss by the islanders of their supposed 'simplicity' and 'childlikeness' which was objected to.21

Examination of the Europeans' comments on the behaviour of returned labourers - especially when the latter were proving of help in some way - reveal that the islanders were often 'pushy', and assumed equality with the Europeans for the occasion. Thus Daybusch, who was helping Mahaffy with investigations into crimes committed on Malaita in 1902, and was not sparing in his criticism of the Europeans' proceedings, earned Mahaffy's disapproval.

20 Woodford 'Diary', 31 October 1888.

21 See, for example, Ivens 1918:228.
Cunning, treachery, cupidity are writ large all over him. So bad was the impression he created upon Captain Coates and myself that it was with difficulty that we could bear to talk to him. He is quite the most repulsive specimen of the 'returned Queensland native' that it has ever been my misfortune to meet.22

Mahaffy, therefore, recognized a type of the 'returned Queensland native', and many others would have agreed about the characteristics displayed by the 'specimens'. Although objectionable to Europeans, however, there is no reason to think that returned islanders who cadged tobacco and pressed their claims for employment too warmly were in any way degraded. Their behaviour, in fact, was an example of that 'intelligent parasitism', which A.P. Elkin has distinguished as one of the stages through which non-literate people coming into contact with Europeans may pass.23

Observers agreed that differences could be seen in the behaviour of returns from Queensland from that of men who had been to Fiji. Opinion varied, however, as to which colony produced the best effect upon its immigrants. Wawn, for example, saw the

22 Mahaffy to Woodford, 1 October 1902, enclosed in Woodford to Jackson, 1 December 1902, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 7/1903.

23 Elkin 1951.
self-confidence and assertiveness of Queensland returns as a virtue; while others, like J.W. Anderson, who visited Fiji and other parts of the Pacific in the late 1870s, regarded the men who had been to Queensland with distaste as pseudo-Europeans, and preferred the returns from Fiji as more modest products of the labour trade who knew their place. Because they spoke pidgin English and had had more dealings with Europeans, returns from Queensland were more likely to be found offering their services as interpreters and boats' crew than those from Fiji. A.R. MacDonald, one-time government agent and later Inspector of Pacific Islanders for the Mackay district, agreed with Wawn that the sophistication of the Queensland returns was desirable. He went further and argued that it boded well for the Melanesians themselves, and for the islands as a field for European enterprise. Of Solomon Island returns he wrote in 1878:

In a word, the residence of these men in Queensland must be pronounced to be in the highest degree beneficial to themselves and to exercise a salutary influence upon their countrymen on their return. Their intelligence has been stimulated, they have learned the rudiments of useful arts, and have seen the valuable results accruing from

systematic labour. Every returned labourer landed on his island introduces a fresh element of civilization and paves the way for that peaceful occupation by white men which must be the ultimate destiny of these islands.25

An opposing view which was held by many, including some who, like MacDonald had an eye to the economic possibilities offering in the islands, was that returned labourers were dangerous men who had acquired a familiarity with Europeans which passed easily over into contempt. The usual correlative of this view was that the appearance of civilization acquired by the islanders in Queensland sat lightly upon them, and that their innately 'savage' instincts remained intact and were dangerously combined with a new confidence. The argument was put in 1891 that colonials were misled by the apparent docility and civilization of their 'Kanakas' and 'Polynesians', for,

these very men, who have paraded the streets of Townsville and Suva almost foppishly clad, may be seen two months later on their native beach in Malaita, arrayed in a pandanus leaf, with rifle

25 Extract from official log of A.R. MacDonald, government agent, Schooner 'Isabella', June 29 1878, enclosed in Gray to Colonial Secretary, 31 August 1879, 'Correspondence respecting the Natives of the Western Pacific and the Labour Traffic', GBPP, XLVII, 1883:6.
in hand, to shoot at the crew of a passing schooner.26

These generalizations were all based upon some experience and they shared part of the truth: returned labourers behaved in a variety of ways according to their personal character, ambitions, and the nature of their overseas experience.

Opportunity to continue to associate in some way with Europeans was open, until the 1890s, exclusively to the coastal returns. The 'association' was not always of a peaceful kind. In the 1870s and 1880s, armed and emboldened by their terms in the colonies, returns were frequently involved in attacks on the ships and boats of recruiters and traders. Returned labourers were prominent, for example, in the attack on the Dancing Wave at Gela in 1875 and in the attack on the Janet Stewart near Kwai, Malaita, in 1882. But by the end of the 1880s, such attacks were rare, and the returns appreciated the rewards - less spectacular but more certain than those which came from looting a ship - which could be earned by assisting the recruiters as victuallers, interpreters and boats' crews. There were many services required by the recruiters, who paid well for them. For

26 Amherst and Thompson, I, 1891:1xxvii; see also Brisbane Courier, 30 November 1880 for a similarly sceptical view on the 'civilizing' effects on islanders of a term in the colonies.
example, a man from Uru, Malaita, who worked as an interpreter and persuader around his island for the Helena's recruiters in 1892 was paid, '300 sticks of tobacco, 40 clay pipes, a pocket knife, 3 Jew's harps, a looking glass, a sheath knife, a bead necklace, 2 leather pouches, 12 yards of calico, one dozen fish hooks, a briar pipe, 3 large knives, 2 axes, 6 rings, and a dozen matches'.

27 Boats' crews were also handsomely paid. Some men undertook to work only for the course of the voyage around their island or through the group; others stayed aboard the ship for years and pried back and forth from the islands to the colony until the port became home as much as the passage.

Returned labourers who were outstandingly successful in tapping these supplies of trade goods were, of course, Kwaisulia, Mahooallah, Raha, and the others discussed in Chapter IV. As well as the passage masters there were, however, many others of lesser stature such as Daybusch of Uru, and 'Old Tom' of Savo who came aboard the Para - of which Wawn was the master - in 1894 'as usual "on the

27 *Argus*, 10 December 1892.
The usefulness of returned labourers to Europeans dated from the earliest days of labour migration. Traders needed informed and reliable agents for their business in the Solomons. In 1877 the recruiting agent aboard the Fiji schooner Dauntless encountered a good example of the 'useful return' at Marau Sound, Guadalcanal.

Most opportunistly we here dropped across a returned labor of Dr Cruishanks, who, knowing some of us, volunteered to come and do the interpreter, getting up fifty-six recruits right away; he was formerly kidnapped by the Wainui steamer; on asking him if he regretted it, he said not at all, now that it was all over; at

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28 On Daybusch see Mahaffy's comment above p. 264, and Brenan to Under Secretary, 19 March 1902, QSA, GOV A 35. Daybusch is one of the few islanders who can be traced, however faintly, from recruitment through his term in Queensland to his return. He was recruited from Malaita by the Lochiel in 1889. He worked for three years on one of Cran Brothers' Maryborough plantations and opened a bank account under the supervision of the Inspector of Pacific Islanders in the district. Daybusch was returned by the Helena in 1892. Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, 'Ledgers of deposits and withdrawals on Pacific Islanders' Savings Accounts, Feb. 1885 to Nov. 1907', QSA IPI 3//11; Immigration Agent to Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, 27 March 1903, 'Circulars addressed to the Inspector, April 1887-28 April 1908', QSA 27/326; Wawn, 'Private Logs...', 3, 16 August 1894.
the time he was frightened, not knowing white men's ways, but he fell in with a Turaga vanaka who treated him well. This man has provided his district with tobacco from seed supplied him here; he was without exaggeration, one of the most intelligent natives I ever met; it was a treat to hear him lecture two or three gaping savages, talking about the wonders of the white man. 29

This man had maintained contacts with the labour traders, as well as acting as an agent for trading vessels which visited Marau Sound. Some returns specialized in the latter occupation. In the following year the spokesman for the Dauntless reported developments on Gela and Guadalcanal and that 'Many of the trading vessels now employ returned labor as agents, giving them a little tobacco and trade, and this system is working fairly well, the natives so far showing themselves tolerably honest.' 30

Like the passage masters, the men who worked occasionally as interpreters, boats' crews and traders' agents were able to obtain what they wanted from the Europeans without forfeiting their place and rights in their own society. Unlike many of the men who re-recruited almost immediately after their return, and those who became permanent

29 Fiji Times, 30 June 1877.

30 Ibid, 2 October 1878; on returned labourers acting as agents for traders see also Woodford 'Diary', 12 June 1886.
crew aboard labour vessels, these men were not totally alienated from their communities, although some had taken long steps away from the patterns of behaviour usual to them. Thurston believed that the individualism displayed by some returns constituted a grave threat to harmony within the communities to which they belonged. With an eye to the Melanesians' internal arrangements and affairs which was unusual at the time, he wrote,

The life of a Melanesian is bound up with that of the community to which he belongs however small or sub-divided it may be. He neither has, nor ever had, any individuality, but moves, acts and thinks only as part of a whole, and direct mischief and bitter resentment is created by contempt or indifference shown for the will of his community.31

Although this was perceptive and contained a general truth, it was over-simplified. It was not 'individuality' as such which was automatically resented, but rather individualism unaccompanied by the usual attention to the rights and claims of kinsmen. Informants said that men who tried to hold back the greater part of the goods they returned with or earned through their contacts with recruiters - or who habitually kept the most desirable things for themselves - were unpopular. There were, nevertheless,

31 Thurston to C.O., 22 October 1895, CO 225/49.
examples of returned labourers who displayed a high degree of individual enterprise without forfeiting the approval of their fellows. Indeed, if they gave customary considerations their due, their local standing was likely to be elevated; this was apparently the case with a successful entrepreneur who was observed by Woodford on the beach at Tasimboko, Guadalcanal, in 1888:

This man had spent most of his life in Queensland but had been home several times to the islands. At the present time he had just been landed out of a Queensland recruiting ship on board which he had been employed as interpreter & recruiter, and through his instrumentality the ship had got a large number of boys on the coast of Guadalcanar. Among the things that had been given him as pay for his services the most important item was a good ship's boat, and at the moment of our arrival the proud owner was the centre of an admiring crowd of natives & with their assistance he was getting up the sails & preparing to launch her from the beach on a trial trip previous to an expedition to Gela with a cargo of eggs & passengers.

Woodford subsequently heard that the trip to Gela was successful, and that the boat owner was charging a fare of two porpoise-teeth per passenger. Like the returns who exchanged the contents of their

32 Woodford 'Diary', 31 October 1888.
boxes for shell money, this man was deriving great personal advantage, in the terms and values of his own society, from the way in which he exploited the rewards which his usefulness to Europeans had brought him.

RELIGION offered another new field of activity to islanders who were significantly affected by their experiences overseas. By the 1890s the Melanesian Mission had won many converts on Gela and Ysabel, and among the mission's adherents there were numbers of men who had come into contact with Christian teaching in Queensland and Fiji. The process by which the mission's work was stimulated by the return of Christians from the colonies was a slow one, however. In 1894 the missionary Brittain reported that there were only five islanders returned from Queensland who were working as teachers in the mission's schools. He hoped, however, that the mission, by intensifying its work in the islands and by subsidizing missionary endeavours in the colonies, would ultimately benefit by attracting Christian and educated returned labourers. 33 Throughout the 1890s Brittain's plans were realized to an extent for a number of returns - Gela men in particular - declared their intention

of assisting the Melanesian Mission in its work when they reached home.  

In 1891 the Melanesian Mission had three schools on Ulawa and five on San Cristobal at which some of the attenders were returned labourers. The northern and western islands went untouched by the mission, as did Guadalcanal until 1894. There returned to Buka, Bougainville, Savo, Ugi and Guadalcanal islanders who knew something of Christianity, and some of them - like 'John' Keila who returned to Guadalcanal aboard the Fearless in 1888 with the avowed intention of eliminating pagan practices among his people which were now offensive to him - may have intended to spread Christianity among their fellows. But, with no support from an established mission to call upon, they could not make much headway. Guadalcanal proved a particularly unprofitable field for the mission: in 1894 two islanders who had been baptized in Queensland and later received instruction at Norfolk Island were landed by the Southern Cross on the weather coast of that island.  

34 Argus, 7, 17 December 1892. Samson Jacko, a QKM convert, returned to found a school among his own people at Malagetti on the south coast of Guadalcanal in 1892, but seems to have made little progress. Hilliard 1969:49.  

Dr Welchman visited them after a few months had elapsed and found them helpless, doing nothing, 'and being bullied by a truculent chief'. Welchman took away two of the hapless would-be missionaries, leaving one 'who could not leave having to stay and work out a fine imposed upon him for being absent in Queensland when his father died'.

Predictably, it was on Malaita that labourers returning as Christians had the greatest impact. The Melanesian Mission established a school at Sa'a, Malaita, in 1880. This school, which did not have a European missionary in residence until 1890 but was visited regularly by missionaries from Gela, absorbed some of the returning Malaitans who had received Christian instruction in Queensland. The Christians who comprised the Sa'a settlement had to struggle against the enmity of the pagans who were armed with rifles and muskets smuggled ashore from the labour ships. The establishment of the Sa'a school heralded the division of the people of Malaita into Christians and pagans which has been characteristic of the island until the present day, has shaped its history, and has been the source of many problems for the British administration. The understandable hostility of the bushmen towards a community of

36 Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Mission, August 1896:5.
people drawn from all over Malaita, claiming land rights and violating pagan tabus, was exacerbated by 'the comfort and prosperity of the Sa'a people', who received tools and other material assistance from the Melanesian Mission, and by the readiness of the Sa'a Christians to help naval and government officers in their pursuit and punishment of pagan lawbreakers.  

'The Malayta men have generally an unenviable reputation', wrote Brittain in 1894, 'and yet they show themselves very willing recipients of Christianity and all civilizing influences when properly brought to bear upon them.' This judgment was borne out by the numbers of Malaitans who returned with the intention of establishing Christian schools. In 1898 Woodford noted that 'Many natives have recently returned from Queensland and Fiji, especially to Malayta, who have received Christian teaching during their absence, and are anxious for the means of continuing it on their return.' Although Woodford hoped that the Melanesian Mission would offer support to men of this persuasion in order that 'a rapid extension of the Mission's work may be looked for in the near future', such support was not forthcoming.

37 Selwyn to Spence, 10 January 1894, CO 225/46; Goodrich to Commander-in-Chief, 5 June 1894, enclosed in Thurston to C.O., 24 December 1894, CO 225/45.

38 'Report of Rev. A. Brittain...'.
in the 1890s. Christian returns from Fiji congregated at Fiu on the north-west coast of Malaita and were allotted two Norfolk Island trained teachers in 1902. The Mission had established a school at Port Adam, South Malaita, in 1890 which was, in its early years, an enclave of returns from Queensland and Fiji. This school experienced difficulties of various sorts. The Christianity of the returned labourers was often not of an orthodox kind, as was demonstrated in 1896 by a Fiji return. This man had picked up a smattering of Christianity in Fiji and, by blending this with messages vouchsafed him in dreams, he acquired a following among the people in the bush above the Port Adam school. Eventually the visionary competitor was won over to orthodoxy by a teacher of the Mission.

It was no accident that Christianity first took root on Malaita at Sa'a, Fiu, and Port Adam; intensive participation in the labour trade - as migrants and as 'go-betweens' - by the inhabitants of these places had 'softened' them for the reception

39 'British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Annual Report, January 1897 to March 1898', enclosed in High Commissioner to C.O., 28 September 1898, CO 225/55.

40 Southern Cross Log, 7, lxxxiii, 1902:2.

of new ways and ideas. Sa'a was a popular passage where the chiefs—whose authority assured them of a share of recruiting presents and returns' goods—welcomed the recruiters. The hinterland of Port Adam yielded many recruits over the years; so many people had migrated from this area that, in 1894, Rannie found there very young children who could speak pidgin English which they had learned from Queensland returns. Fiu was a market place at which large numbers of bush and coastal people regularly congregated. The area behind the passage was comparatively densely populated by people who lived along the Fiu river. A visitor to Fiu in 1902 reported that 'most if not all' of the people there had been to Queensland or Fiji and spoke 'pidgeon English'. Constant recruiting and returning at these passages disrupted the normal patterns of life and produced at least three of the conditions necessary to the growth of a Christian enclave: a leaven of people dissatisfied with the traditional order, a dependence upon a continued supply of European goods, and a more than usual mobility between the people of the bush and the coast. 42

Several of the Malaitan would-be

42 Rannie to Immigration Agent, 19 December 1894, QCSO, 11572/1894; Sinker 1904:27; Ivens 1918/227.
missionaries were killed soon after their return to the island, and only one, Peter Ambuofa, achieved real success in this capacity. Ambuofa was recruited from the bush above Malu'u harbour, north Malaita, at some time in the mid-1880s. He was converted by the QKM in 1892 and returned to Malaita aboard the William Manson in 1894, determined to work as a missionary. Despite the fact that he was well connected in the To'ambaita district of north Malaita, Ambuofa had to endure implacable hostility from the pagan leaders and their people. His troubles were foreshadowed when he was forbidden to leave the ship at Urasi Cove by Kwaisulia, who was reported to have said, when the captain of the William Manson suggested that Ambuofa might land there, 'No, me no like you, boy like you come be higher than me.'

Ambuofa was forced to begin his work from a makeshift camp on the beach at Malu'u. He remained there for several years and his persistence and persuasiveness eventually won him loyal assistants, such as the returned labourers Peter Fito, who worked in the Kwaio district, and Simon Maenwai.

43 Bundaberg Mail, 14 April 1894; Mahaffy to Woodford, 1 October 1902, enclosed in Woodford to Jackson, 1 December 1902, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 7/1903.

44 Brisbane Courier, 14 March 1895.
who worked among the Kwara'ae people. The breakthrough for Ambuofa came when his gardens flourished at a time when those of the pagans failed. Pragmatic in their religious outlook, the pagans interpreted this as a sign that Ambuofa could summon powerful spiritual forces to his aid and his following rapidly increased. Ambuofa, whose technique was to gain individual converts and impress upon them the necessity of winning their kinsmen over to the new faith, eventually came to wield considerable influence as a Christian teacher in north Malaita. His Queensland education and experience made him an able spokesman for the Christian communities he helped to establish - on behalf of the Christians he petitioned Woodford at one time and the King at another⁴⁵ - and his work laid the foundation for the great success enjoyed on Malaita by the South Sea Evangelical Mission in the years following the deportation of Pacific islanders from Queensland.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The petition to the King, dated 2 May 1907, is in CO 225/50; the petitions to Woodford, dated 16 and 17 October 1912, are among the Woodford Papers.

⁴⁶ Memory of Ambuofa is still strong in the South Sea Evangelical Church centres of Malaita, particularly in the north. His grave at Malu'u, like that of Simon Maenwai at Abu, near Auki, is kept in good order by members of the church. On Ambuofa generally see Young n.d.:225; Not in Vain, 1897-8, 1908-09; Hogbin 1939:179.
Samuel Aqaro was another who returned as a Christian from overseas and played an important part in the spread of the religion in the Solomons. His career in many ways paralleled that of Ambuofa: he was recruited for Fiji when very young from the Guadalcanal weather coast and spent twenty-four years in the Crown Colony where he became a convert to Wesleyanism. In 1898 Aqaro returned to the Solomons as a member of a Methodist missionary party which established a base at Munda on New Georgia. The Methodist religion is now the strongest Christian faith in the western Solomons, and owes some of its success to Aqaro's early work. 47

IN various ways, then, returned labourers were in the van when representatives of European commerce and religion extended their activities to the Solomon Islands. They acted as catalysts upon their communities, breaking down resistance to new ways and demonstrating, by their own example, the apparent

47 Stories told by Aqaro's descendants in the western Solomons allot him a more important role in the formation of the mission and have added touches of colour. It is claimed that Aqaro was at the head of the missionary party which originally intended to work on the Guadalcanal weather coast but was prevented from landing by rough seas and so shifted its attention to Munda. There is no support for this embellishment in the documentary record, however. See Luxton 1955:63; Tippett 1967:358.
superiority of new occupations and religions. Yet the degree of acculturation of the returns, as distinct from that of the repatriates later, should not be over-estimated. The passage masters, interpreters, victuallers of ships, boats' crews, and traders' agents were primarily oriented towards the values of their own society. In many cases men returned from long sojourns in the colonies and entered, without apparent difficulty, into leading roles in the political activities of the communities to which they originally belonged. Several examples were noted by Woodford of returned labourers whose absence had not hindered their rise to positions of leadership and authority in the normal round of island politics. It is interesting to note that, in some men of this stamp, the bloody instincts which Europeans found unsavoury were combined with the 'intelligent parasitism' which they misinterpreted. In 1886 Woodford wrote:

I was talking ashore this morning to the old native who had led and organized the massacre of the town to which our two boys belonged. He told me that he had been in Fiji for three years. I told him he was a d----d scoundrel at which he laughed and asked me for tobacco.48

48 Woodford 'Diary', 17 June 1886, also 16 September 1888.
While the option to go again to Queensland or one of the Pacific island colonies was open, those returns who found re-adaptation to village life and values impossible had an escape route. Most of those who remained in the islands after a term overseas, therefore, must have found conditions there more or less satisfactory. Yet, having seen a wider world, many found the physical barriers within which they had previously lived irksome, and their impatience with this contributed importantly to a lessening of the insularity and divisiveness which previously characterized local organization in the Solomons. Returned labourers were often inordinately self-seeking and contemptuous of authorities they had once respected, but only those who had become Christians were, to use Schapera's phrase, fundamentally 'dissatisfied in mind and out of love with the old order of things'. 49

49 Schapera 1934:54; 1947:190.
IN February 1903 two petitions were forwarded to the Governor-General of Australia. One was signed by twenty-two adult Pacific islanders who were liable to be deported in 1906 under the terms of Federal immigration legislation of 1901. The petitioners requested that they should 'be permitted to lead a quiet and peaceful life in Queensland were most of us have resided for many years'. In fact the average term of residence in Australia of the signatories - who lived together in a 'kanaka' community in north Rockhampton - was twenty-five years. The other petition carried the signatures, or merely the names, of fifty-three people of Pacific island descent whose ages ranged from three to twenty-four years. These people, all of whom had been born in Australia and were therefore exempt from the deportation order, asked that their families should not be dismembered, as they would be if the act were put into force. Writing to the Governor of Queensland in support of the petitioners, an Anglican clergyman pointed out that some of them paid rates, were literate, and that all of the long-term Rockhampton islanders were 'quiet and well behaved'. A meeting took place between spokesmen for
the islanders and the Governor of Queensland who admitted the justice of the islanders' case. At this time, however, the islanders could get no assurances that they would not be deported wholesale as planned.¹

For many Melanesians in Queensland their island homes held no attraction. Many had attended schools and churches in the sugar towns, had steady jobs, had raised families there, and achieved security and standards of comfort which were unimaginable in the islands. As well as these positive attractions of Queensland, there were deterrents to returning; each labour ship brought news from the islands, and many long-term residents in Queensland learned that their kin had forgotten them or had died, and that neither property, nor

¹ The petitions are enclosed in Tennyson to Chermside, 9 April 1903, QSA, PRE/87; Hopkins to Chermside, 15, 17 March 1903, ibid; Brisbane Courier, 23 March 1903.
rights, nor welcome awaited them. Among some of the Queensland residents were men who had married or who had formed lasting connections with women not of their own island with whom they could not return. Among the Malaitans in particular, there were many who feared to return because punishment for crimes they had committed and tabus they had

2 A good example is afforded by the islander who expressed his fears to the Officer in Charge of the Pacific Islands Branch of the Queensland Immigration Department in the following letter:

Nambour
June 1907

Dear Mr. Brennan

I am writing to let you know if you want to send me home or not but I am frightened to go home. I got trouble in my country if I go home to my passage I might get kill because they are waiting for me all the time the best for me to stop with my brother Dick Assie and Tom Sulla. Dear Mr. Brennan you will let me stop in Queensland because I will get kill that is all I ask you.

I remain your trully son Peter Janky
Malayta

External Affairs Files, Al 08/1459, Commonwealth Archives, Canberra. Peter Janky wrote to Deakin pointing out that he had been in Queensland for nineteen years and had never been in trouble. According to Brenan Janky had been in Queensland for fifteen years only, but his exemption was recommended. In 1908 Janky was issued with an exemption certificate. Janky to Deakin, 7 January 1908, ibid; Brenan to Secretary, Department of External Affairs 22 January 1908, ibid; Hunt to Brenan (telegram), 5 February 1908, ibid.
violated - to avoid which they had recruited - awaited them if they did so. John Gaggin, whose long experience as a government agent in the Fiji labour trade qualified him to make an informed guess, estimated that one-tenth of all recruits engaged to avoid punishment and faced death if they returned. Many cases in which this was true came to the notice of the Queensland Immigration Department at this time and Gaggin's estimate may not have been exaggerated. 3

Agitation by islanders for a relaxation of the strict terms of the 1901 Immigration Act, which continued from 1903 to 1906, was most strenuously carried on by the members of the Pacific Islanders Association, formed in 1904 with

Henry Diamuir Tongoa as its chairman. The Association charged a membership fee of five shillings per head per annum. It held monthly meetings at its headquarters, a hired hall in Mackay, at which an agenda of matters relating to the proposed deportation was discussed, minutes were kept, legal advisors retained by the Association were consulted, and press statements were prepared and issued.

In August 1906 the islanders presented to Alfred Deakin, the Australian Prime Minister, an alternative to their deportation from the Commonwealth. The Association's 'Scheme' began with

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4 Henry Diamuir Tongoa was thirty-two years of age in 1906 and had been in Australia for twenty-six years. He was then unmarried and the proprietor of a boarding house in Mackay. In giving evidence to the 1906 Royal Commission Tongoa insisted that 'If the "boys" have to go back then the white men will have to leave the islands.' When told by one of the Commissioners 'That sort of talk will not frighten the government of this country', Tongoa stood his ground, saying that he had no intention of frightening the government, but 'the "boys" wish to stop'. *QVP.* II, 1906:152. Tongoa, the Pacific Islanders Association, and their petitions were lampooned in a series of cartoons in *The Bulletin.* See especially *The Bulletin*, 27 September 1906. Among his many letters to prominent people protesting against the deportation, was one dated 26 March 1906 to Winston Churchill, then Under Colonial Secretary, External Affairs files, AI 06/6324.

5 *Wide Bay and Burnett News*, 14 June 1906; *Queenslander*, 1 December 1906.
the proposition that all Pacific Islanders who wished to remain in Australia should be permitted to do so and to become British citizens. If this were allowed the islanders asked that a reserve in north Queensland or the Northern Territory should be set aside for them where their 'long experience of tropical cultivation' would be put to good use, and where they would not come into competition with white men. The islanders expressed their willingness to take an oath of allegiance to the King, to maintain law and order amongst themselves, and to ensure that their indigent and disabled fellows would not become a burden on the state. The request for this form of apartheid was a desperate and pathetic one; its framers took pains to stress that they asked, and hoped, for little more than the right to remain in Australia. With respect to the reserve they argued that,

These parts at present are in no way profitable to the state to which they belong, and will remain so for an indefinite time before being opened up or settled upon by any of the present white population in the Australian Commonwealth, though they may contain untold wealth in minerals, which if (as they probably would be) unearthed and discovered by a Pacific Islander, could be worked solely by white men.

This plan for an alternative to the deportation was accompanied by a petition which
requested that the Association's suggestions be accepted. The names of the office holders in the Pacific Islanders Association were listed; its Vice-Chairman, Dick McKeeler, was evidently a Solomon Islander. There were 104 Solomon Islands signatories, with the islands of Malaita, Yasabel, Guadalcanal, Gela, San Cristobal and Buka being represented.\textsuperscript{6}

A number of Europeans who had experience of the islanders at their homes and in Queensland were uneasy about the expulsion of the Melanesians. Some Queenslanders expected that many islanders would resist the deportation order and cause serious disturbances in the sugar districts. Government agents, island old hands and missionaries believed that a mass repatriation would involve a great deal of suffering - food might be in short supply in the islands, young children who had been raised in Queensland would certainly find difficulty in adapting to harsher conditions of housing, diet and climate, as would very old and debilitated people. They thought that existing conflicts between bush and salt-water people would be exacerbated by the repatriation, especially if arms and ammunition were smuggled ashore as experience indicated was

\textsuperscript{6} Both documents, dated 31 August 1906, emanated from the Mackay headquarters of the Pacific Islanders Association; they are in External Affairs, Al 06/6324.
likely to happen. They also feared that resentment at being expelled from Queensland would be expressed by anti-European activity in the islands.\(^7\)

Under the terms of the 1901 Immigration Act only those islanders who had been born in Australia, or had been continuously resident there since 1879 or earlier were exempt from deportation.\(^8\) Only 691 were exempt under these provisions in 1906 when a Royal Commission investigated the labour problems posed for the sugar industry by the 'white Australia' legislation. Evidence presented to the Commission indicated that there were many islanders not exempt for whom deportation would involve great hardship. Almost 300 people were married or living permanently with partners not of their own islands; almost 2,000 people had been in Australia for more than ten years; thirteen owned freehold land, and 317 were farming on leased land. The Commissioners

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\(^7\) These views were expressed by various Europeans - government agents and men who had sailed in the labour trade, missionaries, and Queenslanders who had visited the islands - to the 1906 Royal Commission, see QVP, II, 1906:17, 22, 31-3, 50-5, 108, 117-8, 129, 161, 319, 355, 423, and especially Appendix X - 'Extract of letter from Captain John Williams of S.S. "Airlie", to Mr Douglas Rannie, Assistant Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Mackay, 16 May 1906.'

recommended that, in addition to those already exempt, people who were aged or infirm, could not return with their present partners, had children born and educated in Queensland, held freehold land or had not been compensated for unexpired leases, or had lived in Australia continuously for twenty years before 31 December 1906, should not be deported.\(^9\)

The concern about the possible effects of the repatriation in Queensland and in the islands was felt mainly in relation to the Solomon Islanders and to Malaitans in particular. At the time of the 1906 enquiry there were 6,389 Melanesians in Queensland liable to deportation; it was estimated that about 4,800 were Solomon Islanders of whom about 2,500 were Malaitans.\(^\text{10}\) Malaitans had the reputation in Queensland of being the most fractious and violent people among the Pacific islanders, the endemic hostility between bush and coastal people in the Solomons was well known to many Europeans, and the native Christian communities and European settlers were known to be few and vulnerable. It was thought, therefore, that the island which would feel the weight of mass/greatest was precisely the one least equipped to bear it without violence and disruption.

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\(^9\) OVP, II, 1906:lxii-lxviii.

\(^\text{10}\) Ibid:103.
As the deportation got underway, early in 1906, employers, friends of the islanders, and islanders themselves began to appeal to the district inspectors and to the Chief Immigration Officer, John O'Neil Brenan, for exemption in particular cases. 11 It became clear to those administering the deportation that the terms of the 1901 Act could not be enforced to the letter if, as Deakin and others had promised, humanity and compassion were to attend the repatriation. 12 Although the Federal government set its face against the complete rescinding of the deportation order which the Pacific Islanders Association had advocated, 13 it did make substantial concessions. The Queensland officials were notified that the aged and infirm, those who had been living for twelve months or more with partners with whom they could not return, holders of freehold land, and those who had lived for twenty years in Australia,

11 For an earlier example see A.H. and E. Young to Philp, 9 October 1901, QSA, PRE/88, also above note 3 and Brenan to Hunt, 5, 10 January 1907, ibid, PRE/84; Brenan to Hunt, 22 August 1907, External Affairs, Al 08/2939; McCotter to Immigration Agent, 17 June 1907, Miscellaneous Correspondence Records, QSA, IPI 3/18; Inspector at Bundaberg to Inspector at Maryborough, 16 August 1907, ibid.

12 *Port Denison Times*, 20 January 1906; *Maryborough Chronicle*, 17 January 1907.

13 Hunt to Tongoa, 2 October 1906, External Affairs, Al 06/6324.
were not to be deported against their will. Cases involving the parents of children who had been born and educated in Queensland, and holders of unexpired leaseholds who had not been compensated, were to be forwarded to the Federal Department of External Affairs for review. Further than this the government would not officially go, although in a large number of cases people whose claims to remain in Australia did not come into the official categories were granted exemption.

On 31 July 1908 the offices of the Pacific Islands Branch of the Queensland Immigration Department

14 Memorandum by Hunt, enclosed in Circular to Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, 6 August 1906, 'Circulars...9 June 1904 to 23 August 1908', QSA, 27/326.

15 The rules were not interpreted with great consistency. In accordance with them islanders suffering from leprosy and detained in the Little Bay lazaret, New South Wales, were exempted, and islanders who could make out a case for exemption on the grounds that they would be killed if they returned were often granted the privilege, but, as Hunt stressed in one case, 'The fact that an islander has been 16 years in Australia and has a good character would not justify the minister in granting a certificate unless there were some very special circumstances connected with his case. Please note and do not submit applications without good reason.' Memo enclosed in Circular 10 May 1907, QSA, 27/326, see also Dick to Deakin, 2 August 1906, External Affairs, A1 06/5999; Port Denison Times, 6 February 1906; Immigration Agent, Townsville, 'Applications for Exemption', Court Buildings, Townsville.
were closed and the deportation was officially complete. A total of 7,068 islanders were repatriated between 1904 and 1908 and a further 194 left Australia between 1909 and 1914. When the deportations ceased there were 1,654 islanders remaining in Australia who had been granted exemption. Included in this number were people exempt under the 1901 Act, those whose specific cases for exemption had been approved, and a few others such as lepers and islanders serving gaol sentences. A very small number of men evaded deportation by taking to the bush. On the other hand, among those repatriated were many - old men who chose to return with their non-exempt friends, and the children of non-exempt parents - who were eligible to remain in Australia.

By relaxing the original exemption

16 Brenan to Hunt, 23 May 1908, External Affairs, Al 08/5120.


18 Brenan to Hunt, 23 May 1908, External Affairs, Al 08/5120; QVP, II, 1906:80; Mossman Champion, 11, 18 October 1906; Cairns Morning Post, 5 January 1907; Sydney Messenger, 18 January 1907; Queenslander, 3 November, 22 December 1906, 6 April 1907; Jones 1961:334; Bolton 1963:251.
regulations the government reduced the likelihood of disturbances in Queensland. Few islanders offered resistance to the repatriation orders; police and district inspectors were empowered to arrest recalcitrants but the number arrested and placed forcibly aboard the repatriating ships was very small. Some gestures of protest were made: there were brawls in the port towns when the islanders were assembled for repatriation; one case is recorded of a disgruntled islander burning a canefield, and some Melanesians voiced their discontent in public meetings, but these gestures were few and ineffectual.\footnote{19} Even had the concessions not been made, the chances of the islanders causing serious disturbances in Queensland were slight because many of them did not understand why they were being deported, and so did not automatically lay the blame on Queensland’s officials and citizens. The surviving repatriates, and the many descendants of repatriates contacted in 1968 gave a variety of reasons for the 'closing' of Queensland. Some thought that the 'King' or the 'Bishops' had ordered the deportation. Others believed that a particular local incident, such as a crime committed by an islander,

\footnote{19} Smart to Manager, 21 May 1906, Alexandra Plantation Letter Book; Maryborough Chronicle, 8 January 1906; \textit{Queenslander}, 24 November 1906, 2 February 1907; Bolton 1963:251.
or an inter-island brawl, was responsible. Mostly the deportation order was seen as emanating from some remote authority and there was no commonly agreed source, such as employers, police or Immigration Department officials, upon which antagonism could be focussed.

In relation to the anticipated disruptive effects of the repatriation upon the islands, an important safety valve was opened in 1907 when 427 Melanesians went directly from Australia to Fiji. In 1903 the general manager of the CSR Company had conceived the idea of recruiting in Bundaberg time-expired islanders who would be subject to deportation in 1906, to work on the Company's estates in Fiji. The CSR Company's shipping agents were informed by the Queensland government that the scheme would receive approval, but it was not put into practice because the agents' estimates of cost were too high and the large cane crop in Queensland in 1903 meant that the Company had immediate and local need for all available
labour. In 1905 the High Commissioner and Governor of Fiji, Sir Everard im Thurn, informed the Governor of Queensland that the Crown Colony would be willing to take directly from Queensland a number of Pacific islanders who did not wish to return home, if satisfactory arrangements could be worked out at the Queensland end. The details were arrived at in the following year. The Department of External Affairs approved the Fiji government's proposal to offer employment to any Pacific islanders who preferred work in Fiji to repatriation. The islanders were to be engaged by the Fiji government and by approved employers at a wage of £14 per annum, with food, tobacco and clothing to be provided on a scale equivalent to that in Queensland.

20 Knox to Charles Parbury and Co., 27 May 1903; Dixon to Charles Parbury and Co., 19 June, 2 July 1903, Charles Parbury and Co., Letter Books, 1902-06, CSRCA. In 1902 a representative of the government of New Caledonia visited Brisbane in order to inform the Premier of Queensland that New Caledonia was willing to take as indentured labourers all islanders who were liable to repatriation and did not wish to return home. The offer was received with thanks by the Queensland government but refused. Sydney Daily Telegraph, 9 December 1902. A similar proposal which was also refused came from Samoa. Queenslander, 19 January 1907.

21 Im Thurn to Elgin, 28 May 1905, CO 225/72.

With the proviso that only 'the most capable boys' were required, Fiji undertook to absorb 200 islanders and the Queensland officials were instructed to select for the scheme those for whom return to their islands presented the most difficulty. In addition Fiji offered fifty free passages to Pacific islanders who had become 'capable artisans' in Queensland or were willing to come with their families to work as small cultivators. Those who accepted this latter offer were guaranteed six months financial support from the government, and a house and plot of land free of rent for six years.23 Although the Fiji authorities asked that preference be given to New Hebrideans, who were generally found to be more tractable than Solomon Islanders, in fact 337 of those who went directly to Fiji were Solomon Islanders, and almost 80% of these were Malaitans.24

Few of the Solomon Islanders who went to Fiji in this way ever returned home. The experience of 'Samuele' Rovidiki was typical. Rovidiki had been recruited in 1900 by the *Sybil* from a village on the central north coast of Guadalcanal. He chose to go to Fiji in 1907. He had attended QKM classes

23 Circular to Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough, 2 November 1906, QSA, 27/326.

in Queensland, had been baptized, and seems to have been reluctant to return home because he wanted to remain a Christian. In Fiji Rovidiki worked at first on road building projects around Suva and subsequently for a number of employers at different places as a farm labourer. He married a Fiji-born woman whose parents had come from New Britain as indentured labourers in the 1880s. The islanders who had come from Queensland were offered a passage home but, like most others, Rovidiki elected to remain in Fiji and he eventually settled at Kalekana (a Fijian corruption of 'Guadalcanal'), near Suva, where land, houses and a church are provided for the immigrant Melanesians and their descendants by the Anglican Church.

The ex-Queenslanders were distinguishable from the other Melanesians in Fiji. Initially, employers experienced difficulties with some particularly independent-spirited men among them, whilst eight agreements were cancelled in 1907 on account of the Solomon Islanders' 'want of diligence'. Ex-Queenslanders drove hard bargains in the shops of Suva and, particularly, when they had been drinking, they brawled with Fijians and Indians, as Melanesians had rarely done in the previous twenty years. There was a general tendency among Europeans to view the men from Queensland as 'cheeky' and 'difficult', but a reporter for the Fiji Times had probably isolated the main cause of this when he wrote, 'We do not think
this idea has any better foundations than a local prejudice against a black man speaking "pidgin English". In the following years the Immigration Department reported that the importation of the experienced islanders had been a success as most of them had settled down and were 'doing well'.

SOLOMON Islanders who had not secured exemption, or taken the alternative offered by Fiji, assembled at Cairns, Mackay and Brisbane for repatriation. Fearing that the tempers of many of the deportees might be short, the government reduced the chances of friction by arranging for New Hebrideans to be shipped from other ports. Between 1906 and 1908 approximately 4,000 Solomon Islanders were repatriated aboard Burns, Philp and Company's steamers Moresby and Malaita. The arrangements to govern the return of the islanders to their passages were the subject of heated debate between the Queensland Immigration Department and the BSIP government. In 1903 Olaf Svenson, a Solomon Islands trader, had proposed to Woodford that he was willing to transport the islanders from Gavutu, near Tulagi, the seat of government in the Solomons, to their passages at a

25 'Annual Report on Polynesian Immigration 1907', Fiji Legislative Council, 1908; 'Annual Report... 1908', ibid, 1909; Fiji Times, 5 February, 2 March 1907.
cost of £2.10.0. per head or £3 per head if a free
passage had to be given to a government agent. In
another submission Svenson suggested that he would
arrange the whole matter of repatriation from
Queensland to the islands at £5 per head.26 Woodford
approved of the first plan and urged the Queensland
authorities to open negotiations with Burns Philp
who would act in conjunction with Svenson.27
Discussions were held accordingly,28 but the Queensland
officials, especially government agents, registered
strong disapproval. They argued that the repatriates
were the responsibility of the Queensland government
until they were finally landed at their homes, and
that Svenson’s proposed arrangements gave insufficient
protection to the islanders in the time between
arrival at Gavutu and ultimate disembarkation.29

Eventually a compromise was arrived at.
A depot was constructed at Gavutu at which islanders
awaiting a passage to their homes were to be maintained

26 Svenson to Woodford, 11 December 1903, QSA,
PRE/84.

27 Woodford to Chief Secretary, 19 February, 6
June 1904, ibid.

28 Interview in connection with offer made on
behalf of Messrs Burns, Philp and Co., Acting
in conjunction with Captain Svenson of Gavutu,
Solomon Islands, enclosed with a memo from the
Chief Secretary’s Department, 10 May 1905,
ibid.
at the expense of the Federal government, and at which the authority of government agents appointed in Queensland was to be equal to that of the Resident Commissioner and his deputies. The distributing boats were to be accompanied by a Queensland government agent in whom final authority to decide on all matters relating to the landing of the islanders was to be vested. In practice the spirit of compromise did not prevail, for Woodford assumed command of the entire operation each time the Moresby and Malaita arrived in the group. He appointed an officer to accompany the distributing vessels - the Lindsay, Malekula, Eugenie and Leueneuwa, chartered by Svenson, and the government ketch which shared in the work - and insisted that all decisions were to be his because 'Imperial authority overruled Queensland'. When Arthur Thompson, one of the Queensland government agents, remonstrated with the Resident Commissioner and pointed out that the repatriation was also a Federal matter, Woodford merely replied that "he was aware of that", and walked away. Thompson anticipated trouble because he claimed that the good standing in which he and the other government agents were held by the islanders would be negated by the fact that all the distributing boats had been used for local recruiting around Malaita, and that the islanders had reason to be suspicious of them on account of the recruiting methods which
had sometimes been adopted by their crews. 30

Thompson's fears were not realized, however. There were some complaints about excessive and expensive delay at Gavutu which caused some islanders to return home with depleted boxes, and a Burns Philp store at the depot was criticized for selling tobacco to the repatriates at exhorbitant prices. The distributing, however, was done smoothly; pains were taken to land people at the correct passages, and due regard was given to the wishes of those who, on getting reports of conditions at their homes, were unwilling to land.

Many of the repatriates had no intention of re-joining the communities they had left. Among the Malaitans who had attended the QKM schools some knew of the Christian settlement begun by Peter Ambiufa at Malu'u and informed the repatriating officers that they wished to be landed there. Similar Christian communities were developed by QKM converts at Sinerango and One Pusu on Malaita, and at Port Adam, South Malaita. In 1907 a school was established by a repatriated labourer at Maru Bay, San Cristobal, and Peter Wetigo, another Queensland convert, began work

30 Thompson to Brenan, 11 December 1905, ibid; Queensland, 22 December 1906. The High Commissioner reprimanded Woodford for his high-handed behaviour towards representatives of the Australian government. Im Thurn to Woodford, 7 January 1907, WPHC, Despatches to Resident Commissioner, BSIP, 10/1907.
at Wainoni Bay in the same year. Also in 1907 a school was started by a Queensland repatriate at Betipano, Guadalcanal, and David and Ruth Sango, two of the QKM's most ardent converts, began mission work at Talise anchorage on the weather coast of Guadalcanal. The Christians who gathered at these centres sent messages to friends awaiting repatriation from Queensland urging them to land at the 'school'.

Melanesian Mission schools on San Cristobal, Gela and Ysabel absorbed some of the Christian repatriates, and the Mission made determined efforts to recruit repatriates for its schools on Malaita. It was for this purpose that A.I. Hopkins of the Melanesian Mission visited Queensland in 1907 and informed people awaiting repatriation of the existence of the Mission's schools on Malaita at Gnore Fou, Sa'a and Fiu. Hopkins believed that his visit did result in a number of people opting for the schools rather than their original villages, but he regretted that the move had not been made earlier.

In other cases repatriates decided to enter the Christian communities when they received information about conditions at their homes. For

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31 *Queenslander*, 5 January 1907; *Not in Vain*, 1906-7; *Melanesian Mission Report*, 1907, 1910; Palmer to Brenan, 1 January 1907, External Affairs, Al 07/9881.

example, some repatriates aboard the Leueneuwa in 1907, on hearing of the overweening power of Kwaisulia at Urassi, and of the disturbances in the area provoked by his clashes with the Manaobans, determined not to land at Urassi but to join with the Christians at Malu'u. 33 Sometimes the decisions were made in response to missionaries soliciting support from the distributing ships. A.C. Pickering, a Queensland government agent, informed Brenan that 'the missionaries of every denomination are always glad to get return islanders to land at their stations, and generally send off their boats to enquire for boys if the ship is only a few miles from the station'. 34

By 1908 there were forty-four Christian enclaves on Malaita 35 which afforded refuge to those who would have faced retribution stemming from earlier

33 Queenslander, 12 January 1907. Another school, which absorbed considerable numbers of Lau people and mainlanders who did not wish to enter into the turbulent politics of the area, was established at Fou'ia on the mainland of Malaita opposite Ada Gege, Kwaisulia's stronghold. This school was begun by Jack Talofuila, a Lau man who was converted in Queensland by the Robinson mission at Mackay. For some years it had to struggle against the hostility and harassment of Kwaisulia who resented Talofuila's influence. Southern Cross Log, 1905; Hopkins, 'Autobiography': 124; Ivens 1930:66, 151.

34 Pickering to Brenan, 21 November 1904, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 127/1904.

35 Not in Vain, 1907-8.
crimes or feuds, and to people whose conversion to Christianity had alienated them from the traditional life. This reduced somewhat the disruptive effect of the repatriation. The stationing of the naval vessels Torch and Cambrian in the group for the duration of the repatriation, and their prompt investigation of cases involving the killing and harrassment of repatriates at accessible places around Malaita, also had a pacifying effect.\footnote{36} Despite these precautions many reports came in of repatriates being killed on arrival. In 1907, for example the government agent aboard the distributing ship Malekula was told that two repatriates had been killed within days of their arrival at Manauki, Malaita, seven at Sinerango, and that similar occurrences had made South Malaita 'very disturbed'. It was difficult to verify all these reports, but observers agreed that the island was 'disturbed', especially down the east coast, and attributed this to the killing of repatriates in settlement of old scores, and the provocation, thereby, of new grievances

\footnote{36}{For examples of the unsettling effect of the repatriation, punitive action taken, and its effectiveness, see Woodford to Gaunt, 21 July 1907, External Affairs, A1 07/9881; Gaunt to Commander-in-Chief, 23 July 1902, ibid; \textit{Southern Cross Log}, 1907.}
and antagonisms. Disharmony was also created by the robbing of bush repatriates by coastal men. Thus in August 1906 two bushmen, who had evidently spent considerable time in Queensland, were robbed of boxes and tobacco to the value of £40 by ten Kwai salt-water men. One of the victims wrote to Woodford saying that the incident had produced discord in the area and made fighting likely, but, he added, 'Please Master we no want plenty fight. We want to stop quiet. We want Government to come and shoot boy belong Kwai.'

For most Christian and pagan repatriates alike, the first experience on their return was a bout of illness. Those who had been in Queensland for many years were particularly vulnerable to malaria and the intestinal ailments which were common in the islands. Missionaries reported that it was usual for repatriates to be in poor health for about six months after their arrival. Despite precautions taken in Queensland, considerable numbers returned

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37 Extract from Government Agent Palmer's Log, Distributing ship Malekula, 11 June 1907, enclosed in Brenan to Hunt, 16 July 1907, External Affairs, Al 07/9881; Woodford to High Commissioner, 14 November 1906, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 4/1907; Cairns Morning Post, 1 December 1906; Maryborough Chronicle, 19 January 1907; Sydney Morning Herald, 30 June 1908.

38 Oroar to Woodford, 19 May 1906, enclosed in Woodford to High Commissioner, 8 August 1906, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 221/1906.
with tuberculosis and other diseases, and there was a high mortality rate amongst repatriates. Europeans who witnessed the repatriation and its aftermath, and islanders who participated in it or remember it, recalled that very few of the children born in Queensland who returned with their parents survived the radical changes in climate, diet and sanitary conditions they experienced in the islands. 39

Repatriates provoked changes within their communities. Many, especially those who had been absent for a long period, felt themselves superior in knowledge and experience to their untravelled elders and contemporaries and offered challenges to their assumptions and authority. Men who returned with rifles and ammunition, smuggled ashore from the repatriating ships, often intimidated others at their homes and refused to re-assume their allotted place in the normal round of economic and social activities. In some cases their sophistication, arrogance and possession of firearms enabled them to become the chief fighting men of their groups. Some of the armed men hired themselves out as mercenaries and vengeance-killers or, fearing to return to their own people because of a crime committed earlier, they joined another group and

ensured their acceptability by putting their weapons at their hosts' disposal.

Some repatriates were even more enterprising. 'Each returned Kanaka with any force of character' Hopkins recalled, 'wanted to set up with his own as a chieflet, very often with one henchman to start with'. Religious as well as secular authority was called into question, not only by the Christians. Hopkins observed that,

The faith of the Christians and the doubts of the semi-civilized returned Queenslanders, and the dawning of Government control were beginning to undermine the bold certainty and the infallibility of the witch doctors.

Social changes of these kinds - associated with the repatriation - were most marked on Malaita, Gela and Guadalcanal. San Cristobal, Ysabel, Buka and Bougainville absorbed their smaller numbers of repatriates without difficulty, as did the smaller islands such as Ulawa and Savo although, as will be seen later, among the repatriates to these places there were some outstanding individuals whose personal careers merit attention. Choiseul received a few repatriates from Queensland, and some people returned there from Fiji in the early 1900s. Without providing

40 Melanesian Mission Report, 1907; Southern Cross Log, 1907; Hopkins, 'Autobiography':72, 81, 132.

41 Hopkins, 'Autobiography':119.
details H.W. Scheffler, the island's most comprehensive and recent ethnographer, states of the repatriates that they 'figured prominently in the process of social and cultural change which soon followed'. This comment opens up a wide field for speculation. Anthropologists who have studied acculturation in parts of Melanesia which were subject to heavy labour migration have commonly assigned considerable importance to it. On Aoba in the New Hebrides, for example, the new habits and convictions of repatriated labourers from Queensland were largely responsible for the destruction of the traditional hierarchical social structure which had been based on wealth and largesse as demonstrated by the ownership and sacrifice of tusked pigs. In the Pisoa district of New Ireland the system of exogamous clans that governed marriage arrangements was upset by labour recruiting which was, naturally, indiscriminate with regard to the clans to which recruits belonged, and caused an imbalance of the sexes as well. Furthermore, in this area, men returned from Samoa figured prominently in later government-induced social changes such as the appointment of luluais and the re-location of villages. Traditional social organization was disrupted in similar ways, and repatriated labourers

42 Scheffler 1965:18.
were similarly 'elevated', in the Torres islands.  

Although the detailed ethnographic studies which would be necessary to reveal in detail the demographic and social effects of nineteenth century labour migration have not been made in the Solomons, some immediate and long term effects - especially of the repatriation - can be observed by the historian. Labour migration from Gela had been particularly heavy in the 1890s, despite the Melanesian Mission's attempts to minimize it. An estimate made in 1895 placed the population of Gela at about 4,000 and, on the occasion of his visit to Queensland in the same year, Bishop Wilson reckoned that there were more than 500 Gela 'boys' there. Thirteen years later there was 'an immense number' of men with experience of Queensland on Gela, and the Melanesian Mission was experiencing difficulty with them. In 1908 the 'Queensland contingent' organized a strike of the Mission's native teachers whom they urged to hold out for wages of £12 per year. The Mission's troubles continued in the following year as the men from Queensland managed to convince some of the teachers that the 'present' of two or three pounds per year which they received amounted, by comparison

43 Groves 1933:346, 352; Allen 1968:32.

44 'Extract from letter of Bishop Wilson, 20 May 1895', Occasional Papers of the Melanesian Mission, August 1895.
with rates of pay in Queensland, to sweated labour rates. Queensland repatriates typically refused to work in the gardens and in other ways challenged the principles of conduct and behaviour which the Mission was striving to inculcate.

The Melanesian Mission on Gela had always to reckon with the mercenary nature of that island's people. They were labelled at various times 'the Jews of the Pacific', and 'the most money-seeking of the Solomon Islanders'. The repatriation from Queensland had the effect of re-inforcing these traits. 'Avarice and swollen headedness are the vices of the Gela "return"', reported the resident missionary in 1909, and in the following years the Gela men acquired the reputation of being par excellence the traders and middle-men of the Solomon Islands. In keeping with their shrewdness, the high rate of recruitment for work overseas did not predispose the Gela people to recruit for local indentured service, but rather confirmed their preference for 'job work' on plantations and short engagements aboard the ships, work in which opportunities for personal profit were greater.45

On Guadalcanal the repatriates' influence was less marked and less disruptive. The most

important consequence of their arrival was the
propensity of Christians and others who did not wish
to return to their original homes to create new
coastal settlements, and to hasten the general movement
of population from the bush and intermediate settled
areas to the coast. This was especially true on the
weather coast of the island. People who had been
to Queensland had an understanding of the intentions
of European planters which was denied to those amongst
their elders and contemporaries who had not been
abroad and this, with their readiness to engage for
work on plantations, helped to reduce local opposition
to the establishment of copra plantations on the
island's coastal plain. Among the repatriates were
a number of men who had grasped the principles of
systematic cultivation, and they played an important
part in the growth of the indigenous movements towards
the cultivation of coconuts as a cash crop.

On Malaita the repatriation polarized the
pagan and Christian communities and created a social
order which cut across the traditional social and
political structure. Despite their numbers and
solidarity, the Christians in the newly-formed coastal
settlements were vulnerable to attacks by the pagans.
On Malaita, as elsewhere in the group, death from
natural causes was often attributed to sorcery, a
culprit had to be found, and another death was
necessary to expiate the first. As a result of this a
series of killings could go on in a district and spread further afield for an indefinite time unless brought to an end by a compensatory payment or by the kin of one of the victims refusing to seek revenge. Christians were particularly likely to be killed when these situations developed because the pagans could usually be confident that they would not retaliate. \textsuperscript{46} For twenty years after the repatriation pagan raids on Christian settlements were motivated in this way.

The evangelizing spirit of the Christian repatriates posed a great threat to pagan society on Malaita. The technique used by most missionaries - Europeans and islanders - was to urge each Christian to attempt the conversion of his kin and so to spread the new religion along existing social lines. In this way immediate families and broader kinship groups were divided among themselves with the result that traditional marriage arrangements and other social procedures were interfered with.

The missions experienced most success in gaining converts at times of misfortune for the pagans such as the onset of an epidemic or the

\textsuperscript{46} Woodford to Gaunt, 21 July 1907, External Affairs, A1 07/9881; Gaunt to Commander-in-Chief, 23 July 1907, ibid; Quayle to Commander-in-Chief, 14 September 1907, ibid; Hopkins, 'Autobiography':161.
failure of gardens; as a result their strength increased in direct proportion to the waning influence of the sorcerers and priests. The spread of Christianity, therefore, struck directly at the vested interests of individuals and groups among the pagans. Pagan leaders made no secret of their opposition to the schools and harassed them, not only because they resented the drift of people towards them, but because the schools contained returned labourers. The visits by mission vessels to Christian centres gave the Christians prestige as well as material advantages, and the sophistication of the Christian repatriates placed the pagan leaders, who were often ageing and usually less confident in their dealings with Europeans, at a distinct disadvantage. In other ways the schools affronted the pagans. At Bitama, north Malaita, for example, the pagans put up strong resistance - which ultimately prevailed - to an attempt by some Christian repatriates to establish a school there. The Bitama people took this stand because they controlled the porpoise hunting in the area and feared that the presence of the Christian community might offend the spirits whose favour was necessary to the success of the porpoise drives. 48

48 Southern Cross Log, 1908.
In 1907 John Palmer, one of the Queensland government agents supervising the repatriation, reported of Malaitans who had not entered Christian communities nor returned to their original villages, that 'many are clearing patches of scrub along the coast and are planting various edibles'. 49 Non-Christians were also anxious to settle near the coast in order to profit by contact with Europeans and, like the Christians, they cleared and planted land to which they were able to claim some title. Land tenure systems on Malaita were and are various, but common to them all is the principle that an individual's rights to the use of land stem from his membership of a kin group in which rights to the land are traditionally vested. Generally speaking, members of the kin group claim rights to land which, according to tradition, was first occupied and used by a distant common ancestor. 50 People who did not wish to return to the bush could, therefore, trace relationships entitling them to the use of unoccupied land. In the bush, where land was plentiful, the rules which thus determined the validity of a claim to unused land were interpreted fairly loosely, but a similar permissiveness was not possible near the coast where

49 Palmer to Brenan, 1 January 1907, External Affairs, Al 07/9881.

50 Allan 1957:82-6; De Coppett 1965; Keesing 1967a:94.
garden land was in short supply. As a result there was, in the years following the repatriation, confusion and conflict between Christians and pagans and bush and coastal people over questions of land usage and tenure. This situation was made worse by the fact that people who had spent many years in Queensland acquired new ideas about rights and property. According to Ivens, this importation of Europeans notions on these subjects produced an enduring problem in the Lau lagoon and on the mainland adjacent:

Since the return of the Kanakas who brought with them a knowledge of English custom with regard to the ownership of uncultivated tracts of land, and to the rights of all men to fish in the sea, the Government of the Solomons has had to settle cases of unwarranted invasion of property, both on land and in the fishing grounds in the lagoon.51

In other parts of Malaita, missionaries who attempted to buy or lease land - a complicated business at the best of times - discovered that novel ideas introduced by repatriates had made such transactions even more difficult.52

The repatriation played some part in breaking down the hostility and divisiveness among the people

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51 Ivens 1930:84-5.

52 Melanesian Mission Report, 1907; Southern Cross Log, 1912.
of Malaita. Christian settlements were established in each of the island's language-culture areas, and it was possible for a Christian repatriate to choose a school in an area where his own language was spoken; indeed, because of the need for land, most did so. Some repatriates, however, elected to live in other areas either because they feared being punished for an earlier crime if they returned home, or because they wished to make a complete break with their pagan connections. 'Edwin' Manuna, who recruited for Queensland from the bush hamlet of Anfau above Suaba Bay, north Malaita, in 1903, provides an example. Manuna, who went to Queensland aboard the Coquette, attended QKM classes in Ayr during his four years in the colony. Repatriated by the Malaita in 1907, he elected to go to the Christian settlement at Malu'u. Thus a Baileliea bushman came to live on the coast in the To'ambaita district. Tolimcane, who was mentioned in Chapter III, shifted residence on Malaita even more dramatically. Recruited from an artificial island in the Langalanga lagoon in the 1880s, he returned in 1907 as a QKM convert and mission teacher to live and work in the area around Port Adam, south Malaita. At first, some of the larger settlements of Christians, such as that at Gnore Fou, were unstable, owing to
the diverse origins of the people who comprised them, but the end result of this fraternization between people from different areas was to permit freer association between the people of the island generally.

Membership of the SSEM, in particular, eventually brought people from all parts of Malaita into a new mutual relationship which cut across the traditional bonds and divisions. It was possible in the 1940s for a high degree of unity of purpose to be achieved amongst the Malaitans who supported the Marching Rule movement; as has often been observed before, the existing SSEM structure provided a framework for the organization of Marching Rule in which many SSEM teachers were prominent.

It is arguable that closer links existed between nineteenth century labour migration to Queensland and the Marching Rule movement. Marching Rule was a millenarian, contra-acculturative, and political movement which began in the Ari Ari district of Malaita and spread to capture the imaginations and energies of people throughout the island. There were also some adherents on Gela, Ulawa, San Cristobal and Guadalcanal. It has usually been argued that


54 Allan 1950:30, 41; Hilliard 1969:64.
the trauma of the Second World War, and the exposure of many Malaitans who worked for the Americans as members of the Solomon Islands Labour Corps and were thus given demonstration of the technological resources and seemingly limitless wealth of the Americans, were the mainsprings of the movement. When Marching Rule was at its most influential, separate villages were established to house those who supported the movement's leaders in their programme of civil disobedience, and shared their faith in the prospect of the return of the Americans, with a consequent instant improvement in the conditions of life for the Solomon Islanders. Malaita was divided into sub-districts over each of which a Marching Rule chief was appointed. For a time the movement was extremely disruptive of British administration in the islands - San Cristobal and Guadalcanal being considerably affected as well as Malaita - and of the patterns of native life there. While it is certain that exposure to American wealth and confidence worked powerfully upon the minds of the leaders of the movement, connections with earlier acculturative experiences can be detected. 55

Resentment at the general attitudes adopted by Europeans towards islanders, the necessity for

55 Allan 1950 is so far the most comprehensive study of the Marching Rule Movement.
solidarity amongst the people of Malaita, and the
collection of money were essential planks in the
Marching Rule platform. One of the leaders of the
movement outlined these features of its programme
as follows:

In the first place, in every sub-district
subscribed £1 each man, and the clerk
took the account and total of the money
collected. The MR was against 'cheap
labour' and against being bullied by
Europeans etc. etc., bad accommodation
when working either on land or sea.
The order given by the Head chiefs of
Are-Are to all other sub-districts
was to make or build big villages and
not to live scattered anywhere or
everywhere thro. the bush, but to
have villages along and around the
coast line.\textsuperscript{56}

This programme bears resemblance to the contents of
the petition sent to the King in 1907 by Ambuofa and
Benjamin Footaboory - both returned labourers - and
of two letters addressed to Woodford in 1912 by
Ambuofa, Footaboory and five other men associated
with the SSEM - at least two of whom were returned
labourers.\textsuperscript{57} The point should not be pressed too
hard, but it seems likely that discontent with
conditions in the Solomons experienced by men who

\textsuperscript{56} Timothy George, personal correspondence,
3 December 1968.

\textsuperscript{57} See above p. 280, note 45.
had knowledge of better conditions in the colonies, and ideas as to how reforms could be secured, were common among SSEM adherents from an early date and found expression much later through the Marching Rule movement.

The most direct connection between labour migration to Queensland and Marching Rule is to be seen in the person and career of Timothy George. In Queensland, where he was known as George Mahratta - the last name being a common corruption of 'Malaita' - he received a full primary, and a few years of secondary school education before returning with his parents to Malaita in 1907. After his return he attended the SSEM school at One Pusu for a time, but left when he found that he was expected to teach rather than be further educated himself. For a number of years he worked aboard Levers' ships in the islands and, in the course of this work, he visited Sydney in 1913 at the time of a large-scale dock strike there and witnessed similar industrial unrest on a visit to New Zealand. He was embittered and frustrated at being unable to secure employment commensurate with his abilities, and this, plus the education he had acquired in Queensland, equipped him to become an enthusiastic and forceful spokesman for the Marching Rule movement of which he eventually became the Head
Chief. 58

AMONG the people who returned to the Solomons from Queensland in 1906 and 1907 there were, as has been demonstrated, many who were unable or unwilling to re-adapt to the life from which they had been absent for so long. Until 1911 it was possible for people in this situation to recruit for work abroad in Fiji or Samoa, and there was an increasing demand for labour on the plantations and aboard the ships within the group itself. The Fiji recruiting vessel Clansman did a brisk trade in ex-Queenslanders between 1907 and 1910, although some of the old hands would not deign to go to the Crown Colony because of the lower rate of wages there. 59 Local plantations absorbed considerable numbers of repatriates, some of whom were found very useful on account of their skills with horses and machinery which they had acquired in Queensland. Some plantation managers, however, found them less tractable and more insistent upon the letter of the law as regards their wages, rations, and conditions generally than those of their employees who had not

58 This account of Timothy George's career is based on information gathered in interviews with him and subsequent correspondence, see also Tippett 1967:201. Timothy George died in April 1969.

59 Journal of W.R. Bell, Clansman, 20 December 1908.
been abroad. A visitor to the Solomons in 1907 observed that many employers were reluctant to sign on 'what is known as the "Queensland Kanaka" until he has been relegated to a term among his fellow savages in the bush where he can forget about some of his ideas about the rights of labour and complaints about food which he absorbed on this side of the Coral Sea'. It was also commented that 'some of the returning boys have been urging them [locally employed men who had not been overseas] to strike for higher pay'.

60 This was not an universal attitude, however; the larger plantations in particular required a certain number of permanent employees to fill positions of responsibility and trust, and repatriated men who were prepared to move with their families on to land provided for them on the estates were often found in these positions.

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Speaking of the re-adjustment or mal-adjustment of repatriates to conditions in their villages, Svenson stated that he 'recruited a good number of them, but there were others who were so comfortable and satisfied with their surroundings that they refused to recruit'.

62 It is difficult to generalize about the behaviour

60 *Queenslander*, 26 January 1907.

61 *Fiji Times*, 30 June 1909.

62 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1907.
of those repatriates who did not engage in further paid employment and did not join Christian settlements. The ease with which they adapted to the old life depended upon the nature of their overseas experience and their personalities; but, especially on Guadalcanal and Malaita, informants recalled that they had a 'difference' about them for the rest of their lives. 63 Idiosyncrasies about personal cleanliness, about the building and decorating of houses, and about the tending of gardens are mentioned as habits which marked them off from others, and some of these traits are still noticeable in the few returned labourers who survive today. A song from the Ari Ari district of Malaita outlines something of this disaffection with village life - which, nevertheless, stopped short of total rejection of it - felt by some of the people repatriated from Queensland. 'Henenoro' means 'disobedience' in the Ari Ari language:

63 This was true throughout Melanesia. Belshaw, who conducted fieldwork fifteen or more years ago, found more survivors than the present writer and notes of them. 'The returned Queensland or Fijian labourer, especially after the general repatriation, often found it difficult to settle into village life; he retained many habits of dress and speech, and sometimes an individual use of money which even today, when survivors are rare, mark him out distinctly from the rest of the community.' Belshaw 1954:43; see also Hopkins 1928:76; Dickinson 1927:118.
Hehenoro came back,
He went to Queensland and came back
To his own village,
To stay with his fellow black men.

He possessed many things,
Tobacco, scissors, shirts and trousers
He could not wear them,
He bought himself some shell armlets.

And plenty of money he had,
Plenty plenty of money
He couldn't buy anything for it,
And he only got hungry.

He knew many things,
Read and write
He couldn't keep quiet,
He spoke only nonsense.

When he met a whiteman,
He spoke English with him
So as to inform him,
That he couldn't obey anymore.

He had suffered enough in Queensland,
His work is finished
To-day he is only lazy,
And only walks about.

He isn't afraid of anybody,
Devil or man
The only thing he does,
Is make offerings to his spirits. 64

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64 I am indebted to Fr P. Geertz of the Marist Mission in the Solomon Islands for the collection and translation of this song. Fr Geertz worked in the Ari Ari district between 1947 and 1967.
According to informants the prestige of the repatriates and the esteem in which they were held fluctuated over the years. At first their accounts of the wonders of Mackay and Suva were in great demand among the untravelled. As years passed, however, the tellers of stories about Queensland and Fiji were resented by men who worked on island plantations because the former claimed that the adventures of the latter were as nothing compared with their own. As they aged the story tellers were usually disbelieved and mocked by the younger people, and their tales became the fanciful amusements of young children. However, as more Europeans entered the islands bringing with them the evidences of the technology of which the returned labourers had spoken, their stories took on a new credibility and were again listened to with respect.

A small number of repatriates participated directly in the economic expansion of the Solomons. Sela Eloua, who spent many years in Queensland, established a copra plantation in north Malaita and became an influential and, by local standards, wealthy man. Francis Kouselo, who lived in Queensland for twelve years and was educated by the QKM, planted coconuts successfully on San Jorge island, off the south-west coast of Ysabel, and became the most influential man in south Ysabel among Christians and pagans alike. Peter Waitasu of Ugi was the most
successful of these entrepreneurs. After twenty years in Queensland he returned to Ugi to found a business which eventually grew to encompass several plantations, a trade store, and a number of trading cutters. These successful men - and others in different fields such as Samuel Agaro and Timothy George - were conscious of the advantages education could bestow and strove to provide it for their children. As a result many of their descendants - doctors, teachers, business men and holders of government posts - are among the élite emerging in the Solomons today.

THE Colonial Secretary, the High Commissioner, and the Resident Commissioner shared the wish that the Solomon Islands should become self-supporting. Woodford's prestige, prospects for a rise in salary, and the likelihood of improvement in the facilities for governing the islands depended upon it. Woodford set about achieving this end by attracting capital to the group and by giving encouragement to planters to acquire land and employ local labour. Considering that the colonial labour trade - with which the smuggling of arms and ammunition was associated - had an unsettling effect upon the islanders, and anticipating that local demand would soon absorb the labour available in the Protectorate, Woodford insisted in despatches in 1905 that 'Recruiting for Fiji and all places outside the Protectorate must be
stopped.' The bringing of a dysentery epidemic to San Cristobal by the Samoan recruiting vessel Samoa - which had been at work around Buka and Bougainville - provided the Resident Commissioner with further arguments for a cessation of colonial labour recruiting. 65

Sir Everard im Thurn's initial response to Woodford's plea was not favourable. His position was a difficult one; as Governor of Fiji he was obliged to consider the interests of that colony which at the time seemed to be well served by the successful voyages of the Clansman to the Solomon Islands. Woodford's argument that the New Hebrides could supply Fiji with sufficient labour was countered by statistics compiled by the Fiji Immigration Department in 1905 which showed that for the past eleven years more than 80% of the colony's Pacific Island labourers had come from the Solomons. Government agents had reported for about the same length of time that New Hebrideans showed a marked disinclination to recruit for Fiji. The High Commissioner argued that German

65 Woodford to im Thurn, 24 May 1905, enclosed in im Thurn to Lyttleton, 29 May 1905, CO 225/69; Woodford to Lyttleton, 1 April 1905, CO 225/70; High Commissioner to Woodford, 29 October 1906, WPHC Despatches to Resident Commissioner, BSIP, 79/1906.
recruiting for places outside the Protectorate was too slight to be of any significance and that, although the local demand for labour was indeed increasing, for this very reason it was necessary to preserve an alternative to local recruiting lest Levers assume too great an importance in the group and set the only standards of wages and conditions available. 66

Woodford continued to put his case. He pointed out that the High Commissioner had violated Imperial regulations in 1906 by permitting Harding and Darbyshire to collect recruits and hand them over to the Clansman. He stressed that the crew of the Clansman were mostly labour trade old hands who were ready to connive at the smuggling of arms and ammunition, and he asserted that Levers paid wages equal to those in Queensland and therefore superior to those in Fiji. 67

By 1907 im Thurn had yielded to the force of Woodford's arguments and, agreeing that 'the financial position of the Protectorate is now

66 Im Thurn to Lyttleton, 2 November 1906, CO 225/69.
67 Woodford to High Commissioner, 12 May, 15 August 1906, 16 February 1907, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 136/1904; Woodford to High Commissioner, 27 March 1906, ibid, 131/1906.
assured', he expressed the opinion that labour recruiting for places outside the group should cease. However, Melanesian labourers were still in demand in Fiji and so no date for the cessation of recruiting was set.

Woodford and his deputy Barnett continued to press for a decision and continually stressed the dangers to European commerce and missionary endeavour posed by the flow of arms and ammunition into the islands via the Clansman. The expansion of Levers' holdings, and the entry of other concerns - such as the Malayta Company - into the Solomon Islands made it clear that the Protectorate could no longer be regarded simply as a labour pool for other places. A last spurt of recruiting for Fiji was made in 1909 when, on three voyages, the Clansman recruited 378 Solomon Islanders. In the next year a mere seventy-nine people were recruited on a voyage which was made mainly for the purpose of repatriating. In 1910 the Solomons (Labour) Regulation was issued. This provided that no Solomon Islanders

68 Im Thurn to C.O., 1 October 1907, CO 225/77.

69 Woodford to High Commissioner, 22 August 1908, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 443/1908; Barnett to High Commissioner, 29 June 1909, ibid, 784/1908; Woodford to High Commissioner, 30 April 1910, ibid, 804/1910.
were to be recruited to serve outside the Protectorate for any term which extended beyond 31 December 1911. After this the only islands in the Solomons from which people could be taken outside the group were German-controlled Bougainville and Buka. By this time Samoa's labour requirements were met mainly by recruits from German New Guinea and, although men from Buka and Bougainville did go as indentured labourers to New Guinea, they were few in number and there was, it seems, at least equal movement of labour in the other direction. Labour migration for places outside the Solomon Islands was effectively at an end.


71 See, for some details on the exchange of labour between the German Solomons and New Guinea, 'Log Book of the "Federal"...commanded by John Strasburg', 28 May, 30 June 1912, Mitchell Library.
APPENDIX I

THE NUMBERS OF SOLOMON ISLANDS LABOUR MIGRANTS

Fiji

The 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers Introduced to Fiji, 1870-1911', is a complete record of Melanesian labour migration only from 1877. There are a few entries retrospective to 1870 which seem to derive from a similar register kept prior to 1875 by the British consul for Fiji and Tonga. This original consular register is missing. The surviving register shows that, between 1877 and 1911, 8,603 Solomon Islanders were brought to Fiji. In the retrospective entries one Solomon Islander, introduced in 1870, is listed.

The number of Solomon Islanders who went to Fiji before 1877 can only be estimated from other sources, principally from newspaper accounts of shipping movements. From these sources the introduction of a further 820 Solomon Islanders can be established. The definite total therefore is 9,424. There were certainly other successful voyages to the Solomons before 1877 - of the Colleen Brawn, Margaret Chessell, and Active, for example - but it is not known how many islanders were secured by these vessels. It is likely, however, that between 1870 and 1911, more than 10,000 Solomon Islanders went as labour migrants to Fiji. The number of Solomon Islanders returned
before 1877 cannot be determined; 4,061 were returned between 1877 and 1914. See 'General Register of Polynesian Labourers...'; *Fiji Times*, 26 November 1870, 11 January, 26 August, 4 November, 20 December 1871, 10 April 1878; *GBPP*, L, 1873:60-1.

**Queensland**

It is impossible to determine the exact number of islanders from any group who went to Queensland. There are two sources of statistical information on Melanesian migration to Queensland—the annual statistical reports of the Registrar-General and reports of the Pacific Islands Immigration Department. Both of these are published in *QVP*. These sources give differing figures on immigration and emigration in most years because the Registrar-General's reports include children and those of the Pacific Islands Immigration Department do not. The former, therefore, are the more accurate records but they do not break the figures down into islands or groups. The Immigration Department records do this, but not, unfortunately, for the years 1878-9 and 1884-8.

In calculating the number of Solomon Islanders who went to Queensland therefore, the numbers of children cannot be ascertained, and the numbers in the years for which no information on the origin of migrants is given can only be estimated.

Exclusive of children, there were 12,284 Solomon Island migrants between 1871-7, 1880-83,
and 1889-1904. It seems reasonable to estimate that Solomon Islanders would have accounted for at least 25% of all Melanesians introduced in 1878-9. There were certainly successful voyages to the group in these years. Of one voyage of the Isabella in 1878, for example, it was reported that, 'There was no difficulty in getting recruits, but there was a danger of the schooner being crushed with too many wanting to go to Queensland.' Mackay Mercury, 26 January 1878, see also 24 July 1878. If an estimate of 25% is taken, then there would have been 91 Solomon Island migrants in 1878-9.

By 1884, when the next gap in the records occurs, the Solomons were providing about half of the colony's indentured Melanesians. Assuming that this was so between 1884 and 1888 - and there is evidence that recruiting was vigorously conducted in the group in these years¹ - 5,540 Solomon Islanders

¹ See Rankin O'Kane and Co., to Parbury Lamb and Co., 29 July 1885, CSRCA, B 202 (3). The records of the hospital for Pacific Islanders at Maryborough - which list the ship and date of arrival in the colony of each patient - show that many of the Solomon Islanders treated arrived between 1884 and 1888. From these records alone it appears that at least fifteen recruiting voyages were made to the Solomons between 1884-6. 'Register of Polynesians admitted to hospital....'
would have been recruited. The estimated total number of Solomon Islanders entering Queensland between 1871 and 1904, therefore, is 18,735. Using the same calculations, 14,105 of the Solomon Islanders can be estimated to have returned from the colony.

New Caledonia and Samoa

No figures are available for these colonies. Few recruiting voyages were made from them to the Solomons; New Caledonia's labour requirements were met mainly from the New Hebrides, and most of the indentured Melanesians on the Samoan plantations were recruited from German New Guinea. Recruiting for these colonies in the Solomon Islands usually rated a mention in naval reports and the logs of Fiji's and Queensland's government agents because firearms and ammunition were supplied to the islanders. On the basis of these comments, and taking their bias into consideration, it might be suggested that perhaps 200 Solomon Islanders were recruited for New Caledonia, and about 500 for Samoa. There is no evidence on which to base an estimate of the numbers who returned.

Very roughly then, between 1870 and 1911, almost 30,000 Solomon Islanders were recruited for
indentured labour in Queensland and the Pacific island colonies.  

2 Even if complete records, such as those which exist for Fiji from 1877 to 1911, were available for Queensland and the other colonies, the precise number of individual migrants could not be ascertained because many islanders went more than once to one place or another.
APPENDIX II

TRANSLATION OF KWAIO RECRUITING STORY

(This story was related at Sinerango in June 1968 by Jimmy Meke, a man in his thirties and a classificatory son of the Assistant Headman of the Sinerango district. The narrative was given twice without substantial alteration. Other men present assented to the details of the story as they were given and corrected the teller on minor points. According to the Sinerango people, a man from the passage named 'Fred' Maeru - who later went to Queensland himself - witnessed the abduction and return of Afio and Tobebe. The details were given by Maeru to 'Willie' Ebeba, a Sinerango man who recruited for both Queensland and Fiji, and it is his telling of the story which is remembered at Sinerango today. The name of the vessel which took and returned the Kwaio men was given as 'Sea Bell'; a Queensland ship, the **Sybil**, recruited Malaitans in 1878.\(^1\))

THESE two men were from Aio, Aio island. One man's name was Tobebe and the other's Afio. Now the people of Aio island had never seen any Europeans nor had anyone in the Kwaio district of Malaita. Now at that

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1 'Register of the arrival of vessels...'
time if a sailing ship from Queensland came close in to shore, near Aio, everybody would say, 'This is a fele ship, a devil ship.' Everyone was frightened, and some ran away into the bush.

Now one day Afio and Tobebe were fishing on the beach. Both of them, fishing. A Queensland ship arrived and came close in to shore. A dinghy came from the ship. They looked at Afio and Tobebe. They came closer and closer, the crew members did, and they all chased Afio and Tobebe. Those two ran away upon seeing the dinghy; they ran into the bush away from the sea. Now Afio and Tobebe ran and ran but it was hard because the crew, I think twelve men in all, chased them. They were caught and held. They were held, everybody had a hand in it, and tied their legs, tied their hands, and put them in the dinghy and took them out to the ship.

When the crew put them in the ship they put them down below. Then they shut them in down below and departed, off they went.

NOW Afio and Tobebe, the pair of them, spoke about Queensland. 'We have always been frightened about this. We said devil, this is no devil, this is something excellent, excellent people. They give you food, good food. They give you good beds, good house. Everything is first rate. This place, this Queensland, is very good indeed. Suppose Queenslanders come here,
it's a good idea for us, all us young fellows, to go there, to get lots of things.'

NOW while Afio and Tobebe were living with Queensland people, their physiques changed. This was because both of them ate white man's food, lots of it. And you know, their bodies became fat, and they both looked very clean.
APPENDIX III

SOME 'KANAKAS' AND 'POLYNESIANS'

'TOMMY' TAEHOVA - Recruited under circumstances related in Chapter III, Taeova worked for eight years on a plantation in Mackay. He attended QKM classes in Mackay, and worked mainly as a 'horse boy'. He subsequently worked for three years as a pearl diver at Thursday Island, and then for two years on a sugar plantation at Port Douglas. He was repatriated by the Moresby in 1907. After his return to the Solomons, Taeova worked for many years on various ships and plantations throughout the group. In 1968 he belonged to the Church of England and was living in the village of Tatonga, in the Logu district of Guadalcanal.

'WILLIE' KABARAGO - The manner of Kabarago's recruitment is discussed in Chapter III. He worked in the Cairns district for seven years, and in the Mackay district for three years, as a cook on sugar estates. He did not receive any religious instruction in Queensland. Kabarago was repatriated to Savo in 1906. He subsequently worked as a cook aboard the Melanesian Mission vessel Southern Cross and once visited Auckland. He has remained a pagan, despite the efforts of Roman Catholic missionaries at Visali, Guadalcanal, to convert him, and he is now the local expert on traditional ways of building and decorating houses.
'SAMUELE' ROVIDIKI - Some details of Rovidiki's career are given in Chapter VIII. He spent seven years in Queensland. When he arrived he was too young for field labour and so did odd jobs in a sugar mill near Townsville in the Burdekin district. He worked as a field hand in various parts of Queensland including the Mackay, Mossman and Herbert river areas. He attended QKM classes in Queensland and became a teacher for the mission. He alone, among the men listed here, learned to read and write. Rovidiki claimed that he could still speak the language of his part of Guadalcanal but said that he had no opportunity to do so now as he is the last surviving Guadalcanal man in Fiji.

'PETER' KOLOULA - Recruited from a bush village above the weather coast of Guadalcanal, probably in 1900, by the Sydney Belle. John Cromar, he recalled, was the ship's recruiter. Many people known to him had been to Queensland and he recruited on their advice. Like all of the men listed here he was unmarried when he left for Queensland although a prospective wife had been chosen for him. He worked for three years on a sugar plantation in the Cairns district, visited a small town nears Cairns at weekends, but did not go to Cairns itself. Koloula did not attend church or receive any religious instruction in Queensland. He returned to his original village in 1903 or 1904 and has not left it since.
'JIMMY' WHATALOUHOU - In 1900 or 1901 he was recruited from the weather coast of Guadalcanal by the Fearless. He worked for three years on one of Robert Cran and Company's Maryborough plantations, and then for three years in the Bundaberg district. In Bundaberg he attended QKM classes, and he recalled the name of the Inspector who supervised the paying of his wages, Henry St George Caulfield. He was repatriated by the Moresby or Malaita ('a big steamer') in 1906 or 1907. After his return to Guadalcanal, Whatalouhou worked on Levers' plantations in the Russell Islands for three years, on Malaita for four years, and on San Cristobal, where he was married, for six years. In 1968 he was a member of the Seventh Day Adventist church and lived at Kuma on the Guadalcanal weather coast.

'ULIAME' MAEAFEA - In 1900 he was recruited by the Lady Norman from Foueda, an artificial island in the Lau lagoon. He worked for three years on Cran's Waterview sugar plantation in the Bundaberg district. With others he received some religious instruction from the Anglican priest in the district. On leaving Queensland he spent half of the £18 he had earned on two firearms which he concealed in his boxes; however, these were discovered by customs inspectors on the wharf and were thrown into the harbour. Maeafea returned to Foueda, where he has lived ever since, aboard the Clansman in 1904. Like most
of the people on Foueda, he has remained a pagan.

'EDWIN' MANUNA - Manuna's recruitment, term in Queensland, and the manner of his repatriation are described in Chapter VIII. After his return to Malaita and settlement at the SSEM centre at Malu'u, he worked for many years as a sailor aboard SSEM vessels.

'DIAU' RAUMAITAU - Raumaitau's recruitment to Queensland and Fiji are described in Chapter III. He spent four and a half years in Queensland, working on a sugar plantation near Townsville. Among the goods which he brought back to the Solomons was a pistol, 'a six-shooter', which many islanders favoured because they were more easily hidden among their possessions than rifles. In Fiji he worked at first as a labourer on government road and bridge building projects near Nausori. Later he worked on Vanua Levu and spent one year as a plantation labourer in Tonga. After his return from Tonga he worked as a farm hand at various places on Viti Levu. He married a Fijian woman and in 1968 he had been living for many years in a village near Levuka on Ovalau. Most of the inhabitants of this village are of mixed Solomon Islands, New Hebridean and Fijian descent.
SADE KURURU - He was recruited by the Clansman in 1904 from Liulan'asi, an artificial island in the Lau lagoon. He worked for three years on a copra plantation on Viti Levu. Kururu was returned to his island by the Clansman in 1907. He remained there for about two years and then worked for some years on a plantation in the western Solomons. In 1968 he was living on Liulan'asi.

'JOE' GUGUMOE - Originally from the bush village of Nailai lani, north-east Malaita, he was recruited in 1905 or 1906 by the Clansman. The recruiters exploded a dynamite cartridge to alert the bush people to the ship's arrival, and a number of people from his district recruited for Fiji on this occasion. Gugumoe worked on a sugar plantation near Suva (probably in the Rewa district) for nine years. He attended an Anglican church for Melanesians in Suva and is still an Anglican. He returned to Malaita probably in 1914 and probably aboard the Moonta. He has remained on Malaita since then, and in 1968 lived in the bush village of Ailaili on the Hahafa river, above the Lau lagoon.

'HARRY' NUGITAU - He was recruited with a brother and some other kinsmen by the Clansman in 1905 from Faka, an island in Suaba Bay, north Malaita. Nugitau worked on a number of copra plantations on Viti Levu for about twenty years. He recalled that the labourers
worked to a task system on some plantations and to a time system on others. He learned to speak fluent Fijian and, at a Church of England school for islanders, he learned to read the Bible in English. At some time in the 1920s he took a job aboard a vessel named Ariadne which was bound for Tulagi. He had intended to return to Fiji but changed his mind on arrival in the Solomons and left the ship. In 1968 he was living in the village of Faufonea, north Malaita.

TOANIA BULIKINI - Recruited in 1906 by the Clansman from Vouseiranu, in the bush of the Kwara'ae district of Malaita. His first job in Fiji was on a cattle station on Viti Levu. He subsequently worked on Taveuni as a labourer on the roads, and then at Samabula, Viti Levu, as a domestic servant. On hearing that his father, who was a man of some importance, had died, Bulikini decided against returning to Malaita. On Malaita he had attended the Melanesian Mission school at Fiu and he attended the Church of England in Fiji. He married a woman from Vanua Levu and in 1968 was living at Soa soa, Vanua Levu.

'PITA' GEREEKA - In 1906 he was recruited by the Clansman from Koa, in the bush of the Ari Ari district of Malaita. He worked at first on a copra plantation on Taveuni and subsequently at various jobs on Viti Levu. He never married and in 1968 was living at
Wailoki, Viti Levu, in a village built on land which is leased to the Church of England, and where a number of people of mixed Solomon Islands-Fijian descent live.

'ALIKI' HUNANUA - Recruited in 1907 by the Clansman from Taka Taka, Ari Ari district, on the south-east coast of Malaita. He worked on cattle stations and plantations in various parts of Fiji and went under contract for some years to Tonga. He speaks Tongan and was married to a Tongan woman and later to a Fijian woman. In 1968 he shared a house with Gereeka at Wailoki.

MAMUKA - Mamuka's recruitment is described in Chapter III. He worked for four years as a butcher for Corbett and Sons, Suva. He visited Suva at the weekends, drank in the hotels and gambled on the wharves. He returned to Malaita in 1912. Mamuka did not receive any religious instruction in Fiji, and he remained a pagan until failing eyesight and health forced him to go to the Seventh Day Adventist settlement at Balafi, near Olumburi, where he was living in 1968.

'ALICK' FAA'NOA - In 1908 he was recruited by the Clansman from the bush near Auki. He worked at first on a copra plantation near Labasa, Vanua Levu,
for three years. Following this he worked near Suva for three years and attended a Church of England school. He returned to Malaita aboard the Moonta in 1914. In 1968 he was living at Nalisagwere, near Auki, and he had not left Malaita since his return from Fiji.

EGITA - Egita was a bushman from Duquassi in the Kwaio district of Malaita. He was recruited at Kwai island by the Clansman in 1912. He was absent from Malaita for about forty years working at various jobs in Fiji for most of this time, but in Tonga for four years. He married a Tongan woman and his two sons by her returned to Malaita with him. He attended the Church of England in Fiji and worked for a time for a Chinese gardener. On his return to Malaita he was given the job of growing vegetables for the government station at Auki. In 1968 he was living at Abu near Auki.
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Goondi Letter Books, 1884-8, 1888-9
Hambledon Letter Book, 1897-8
Parbury Lamb and Company Letter Book, 1892-1902
Charles Parbury and Co., Ltd., Letter Book, 1902-06
Fiji Letter Books, nos. 1-7, 1881-91

Included in these reports are letters, which have been cited, from the Queensland Colonial Secretary to E.W. Knox, General Manager of the CSR Company, and files of correspondence from Knox to plantation managers, officers of the Queensland Immigration Department, shipping agents and others

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IV

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Annual Reports of the Queensland Kanaka Mission

Not in Vain: what God hath wrought amongst the Kanakas in Queensland

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V

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Brisbane Mail

Bundaberg Mail

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Delta Advocate (Ayr)

Empire (Sydney)

Fiji Times

Mackay Mercury

Mackay Standard

Maryborough Chronicle

Mossman Champion

Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle

Port Denison Times (Bowen)

Producers' Review (The Official Journal of the Queensland, N.S.W. and Australian Cane Growers Association, Brisbane)
Queensland Figaro
Sydney Daily Telegraph
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The Bulletin
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