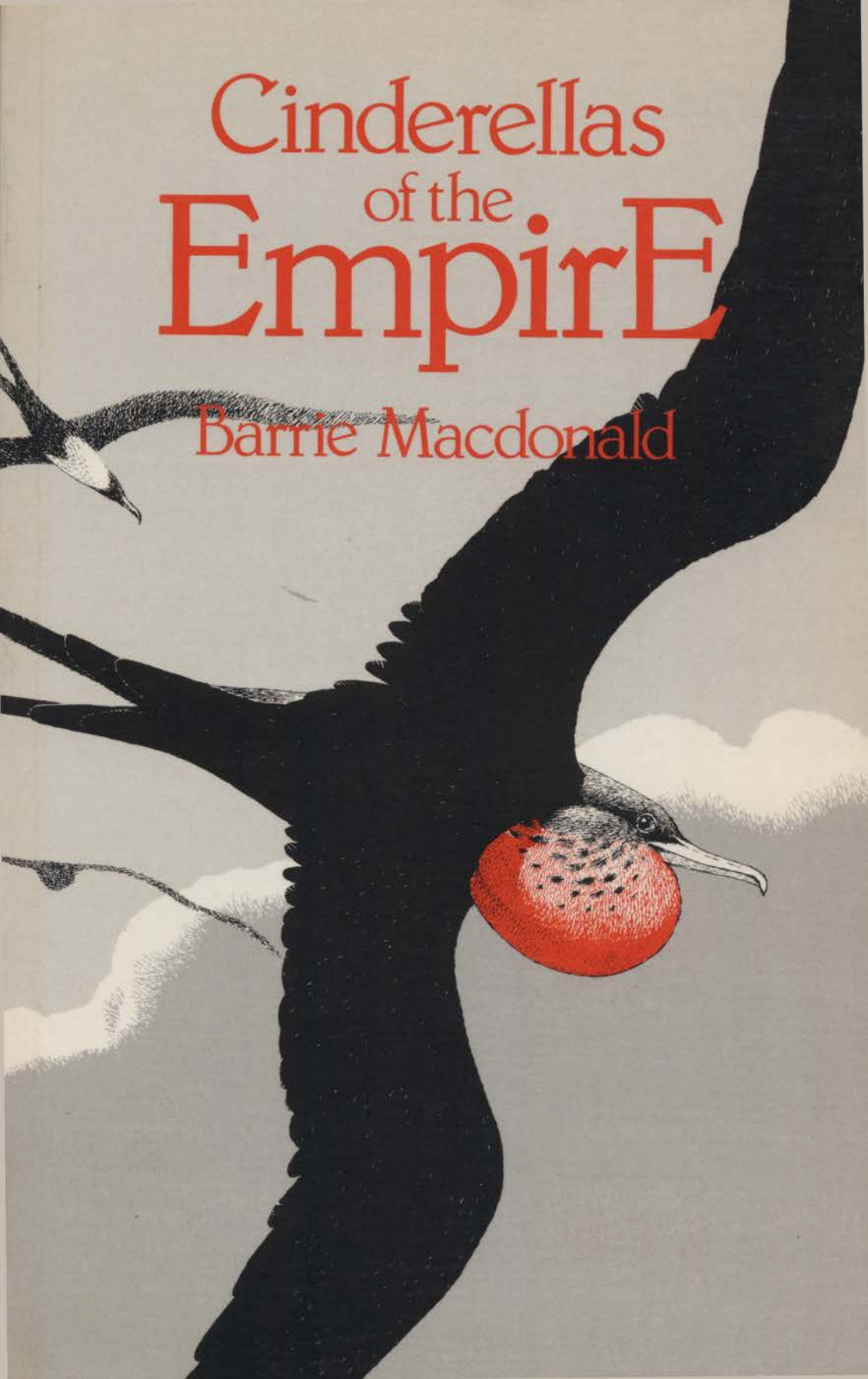


Cinderellas of the Empire

Barrie Macdonald



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For Maureen

Cinderellas of the Empire

Towards a history of Kiribati and Tuvalu

Barrie Macdonald

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and Miami, Fla., USA
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Preface

Kiribati and Tuvalu, now independent nations, were formerly joined as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, one of Britain's more remote dependencies. The islands first became widely known outside the Pacific with the Battle of Tarawa between American and Japanese forces in November 1943. In the years after the war they became even better known with a series of BBC radio talks by Sir Arthur Grimble, a former Resident Commissioner, and the subsequent publication of *A Pattern of Islands (We Chose the Islands* in American editions), which gave a somewhat romanticised view of island life and colonial rule. In the 1970s the question of compensation to the Banabans in respect of the exploitation of phosphates from their homeland, Ocean Island, and Britain's administration of the Colony in general, came under scrutiny in the longest civil hearing in British legal history. Less publicised, but perhaps of greater importance in a wider context, were the implications of two decisions taken by the British Government: the first, in the 1890s, sought to bring two diverse peoples under a common administration and the second, eighty years later, allowed each to seek its own identity as an independent nation. This latter move represented an important departure from the precedents of decolonisation and a belated realisation that problems of scale and of fragmentation might, on balance, be less costly in both financial and human terms than the subjugation of minority interests in the name of territorial integrity.

The sixteen Gilbert Islands lie across the Equator at the southeastern extremity of Micronesia; the nine Ellice Islands, the westernmost group in Polynesia, lie to the south of them. Together they make a chain of small coral atolls and reef islands stretching over 1600 kilometres; they have a total land area of no more than 300 square kilometres and a population of some 63 500—56 000 in the Gilberts and 7500 in the Ellice. In the 19th century the Islanders were gradually drawn into the orbit of the western world. In 1892, each group became a British protectorate, not because their people particularly desired or needed protection, nor because Britain was anxious to protect them even though it did regard the islands as falling within its sphere of influence. Rather, it was because Americans were encroaching on German economic interests in the Gilbert group and Britain, needing international support for its role

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in Egypt, wanted to placate Berlin. In 1916 the protectorates, which had shared a common administration for two decades, were formed into a single colony which was then expanded umbrella-like over Britain's possessions in the central Pacific. It soon included Ocean Island, 400 kilometres to the west of the Gilbert group, which had first been brought under the Resident Commissioner's control when phosphate mining began in 1900; Fanning, Washington and Christmas Islands, all plantations in the northern Line group 3000 kilometres to the east of the Gilberts; and the Tokelau or Union Islands, 1000 kilometres to the east of the Ellice group, which were transferred to New Zealand control in 1925. In 1937, in anticipation of the resettlement of land-hungry Gilbertese and to protect British aviation interests, the Phoenix Islands were also annexed. (At Christmas Island, as at some of the Phoenix Islands, British sovereignty was challenged by the United States, which persisted with its claims until the late 1970s, long after the islands had ceased to be of any real importance for either civil aviation or military purposes. It was not, however, an issue which materially affected life or government within the Colony.)

This book traces the history of the islands and their people from the early 19th century, when they first came into close and continuing contact with foreigners, through to the late 1970s when the decolonisation process was complete. It is a story of progressive cultural adaptation as shown by the Islanders' responses to the successive waves of influence that have washed their shores—to the challenges posed by the introduction of commerce and Christianity and the beginnings of labour recruitment in the 19th century, for example, or to the demands of colonialism in the 20th. Before the Second World War colonial rule was paternalistic, sometimes authoritarian, though generally benign. The islands and their people were poor and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate, as it was called at the turn of the century, could scarcely cover the costs of its administration and had no money to spare for social services. There was some improvement once the Government began to collect royalties on phosphate, and by the 1920s the Colony was dependent upon the industry for half of its revenue, but the influence wielded by the mining interests always ensured that the Government received little and the Banabans (the indigenous inhabitants of Ocean Island) even less from the profits of the industry. After the independence of Nauru, Ocean Island's neighbour, in 1965, phosphate prices rose rapidly. Though there was some acceleration of capital development in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, much of the new revenue was saved in the knowledge that the Colony was heavily dependent upon a wasting asset and because British officials feared the implications of a high recurrent commitment beyond independence.

It was not until the 1960s that Britain gave any serious attention to the decolonisation of any of its Pacific dependencies and even later before it turned its attention to the remote Gilbert and Ellice Islands

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Colony. At one level the Colony proceeded through a series of constitutional stages—many of them unorthodox—in an attempt to cater for particular local circumstances, but at another level, political development had no part in the business of government or in the lives of the people of the outer islands. On Tarawa, which had replaced Ocean Island as the capital after the Second World War, it was different. From the 1950s the expansion and centralisation of government activity had acted as a magnet, drawing a constant stream of skilled and unskilled migrants. Here, in the 1960s, a small élite of well-educated and politically aware Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders came together in competition for employment. The Ellice Islanders had a long tradition of eager participation in education both religious and secular, and had generally had access to much better education than that available in the Gilberts. Thus the Ellice Islanders were the main beneficiaries of the rapid post-war expansion of the civil service and soon occupied a high proportion of the positions available to Islanders. In the mid-1960s Gilbertese resentment grew, especially among civil servants, and found expression in the Gilbertese National Party. At about the same time the 1967 constitution, which provided for only four Ellice Islanders among the twenty-three elected members of the House of Representatives, brought home to the Ellice Islanders the political implications of their being a minority and raised fears of future discrimination. The Ellice Islands secession movement developed quickly, though quietly, and by the time the Government recognised its strength, even its existence, in the early 1970s the notion of 'separation before self-government' was firmly rooted. Despite all attempts at dissuasion by the British Government, the Ellice Islanders remained firm in their purpose and, despite the prospect of increased isolation, reduced living standards, and unemployment, insisted on their 'right' to secede. While the British Government held, and occasionally tried to assert, that it had the power of decision, both the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders had long before been allowed to assume that the decision was one for the Ellice Islanders alone. Still haunted by memories of the Anguilla revolt in 1969, and determined to extricate itself from Empire at any cost, the British Government finally capitulated. In a referendum observed by the United Nations in 1974, 92 per cent of Ellice Islanders voted for separation.

By the beginning of 1976 partition was virtually complete and each colony set on a path towards independence. The Ellice Islanders chose to call their nine small islands and twenty-five square kilometres of land 'Tuvalu', a traditional name for the group. Independence followed in October 1978 after a three-year struggle to establish the basic infrastructure for a separate government and to persuade the British Government to abandon the parsimonious, even punitive, conditions for separation that had been laid down in 1973. In the Gilbert Islands, separation made remarkably little impact but that did not make the path to independence any easier. The Gilbertese remained in sole possession of the reserves accumulated from

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phosphate earnings but the Banaban issue became even more contentious in the time between separation and independence than it had been before. This issue caused continual delays as the British Government tried to find a solution that would meet all demands, while easing the embarrassment caused by the intrusion of a colonial issue into the domestic press and politics. In July 1979, the Gilbert Islands, together with the Line and Phoenix groups and Ocean Island, finally achieved independence as the republic of Kiribati (pronounced Kiri-bas, the local rendition of Gilberts).

Although this book is primarily a history of a place and its people and the impact of foreigners and foreign influences upon them, it is also a case study of culture contact in the Pacific Islands, of colonialism, secession and decolonisation. It examines the way in which, long before the arrival of Europeans, the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders had learned to cope with a harsh environment and to exploit its sparse resources to the utmost. This same theme runs through the more recent past as well, as the Islanders met the challenges posed by new influences and learned to exploit new opportunities. The Gilbertese were generally more conservative than the Ellice Islanders but neither slavishly adopted western ways. Change was both gradual and selective, and more often followed the absorption than the imposition of new ideas and technology. Mostly, too, the new ways were those which gave added meaning to the old and did not involve a radical departure from the past. Thus after surveying more than 150 years of change and cultural adaptation (seen in its most extreme form in the emergent urban societies of Tarawa and Funafuti), and after observing the creation of two independent states, the dominant impression is still one of continuity and of Islanders, whether I Kiribati or Tuvaluan, who still find their identity in the beliefs and values of their forebears.

Some final explanations are necessary. Firstly, although it is the case that the names of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands will gradually give way in atlases and historical writing to Kiribati and Tuvalu, these latter terms have been used here only for those periods and places to which they legally apply. This has been done to avoid anachronism and confusion; it should also be noted that the Gilbert Islands and Kiribati are not interchangeable terms, because the latter includes a number of other islands as well as the Gilbert group. Secondly, a great deal of publicity has been given to the Banaban issue in the 1970s. In their pursuit of increased compensation the Banabans sued both the British Government and the British Phosphate Commissioners and, using the Ellice Islands as a precedent, also demanded secession and independence for Ocean Island. The Banaban pursuit of redress is a major issue in itself and here it has been discussed only in so far as it fits into the wider picture. The court action traversed the history of the phosphate industry and of the Colony but the discussion focussed on those issues that were in dispute, not those which were agreed, and it was based upon selected documents and statements related to the

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claims and counter-claims *now* being made by the protagonists. In writing of the issue, therefore, I have considered the court action only as an issue which affected independence for Kiribati and in looking at the history of the phosphate industry I have based the discussion on my own reading of the original documents, many of which were not considered in court.

The sub-title of this book suggests the tentative nature of many of its findings. The exercise demands a concentration upon major themes, national issues and general trends—a concentration that is sometimes difficult to reconcile with the particular concerns of so many small and relatively isolated communities. And the task is made even more difficult because it was not until the eve of independence that the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders began to recognise national leaders. In the Ellice Islands the combined efforts of church and government curtailed the role of traditional leaders, while in most of the Gilbert Islands custom demanded that no man rise above his fellows. Men and women of influence were scarcely known outside their immediate communities. It is therefore difficult to find spokesmen for 'the people' and, because colonialism was generally regarded as a benevolent institution, there were few confrontations between governors and governed, few incidents that might give an added insight into the colonial relationship. Generally, too, the people still prefer to remember rather than record the stories of their past and their ancestors. Moreover, oral traditions are often regarded as a form of family property; urbanisation and overseas employment are separating trustees from potential heirs. Systematic recording of traditions might help but there are, none the less, increasing difficulties in preserving the past for the future. And in the light of the recent removal of Western Pacific High Commission records from Suva to London it might be added that written records, like oral traditions, could become an endangered species. Most of the research for this book was completed while official records were still freely available. I hope that it will add to what has already been done and serve in some small way to assist those who choose in the future to help record the history of Kiribati and Tuvalu.

Acknowledgements

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Note on orthography

Gilbertese

There are thirteen sounds in the Gilbertese language—a, e, i, o, u, m, n, ng, b, k, r, t and w.

- ng is pronounced as in singer
- b is an unaspirated 'p'
- t may be pronounced as in English; but
- ti is usually pronounced as 'si' (see) but at the end of a word as English 's' e.g. Nonouti = No-noose
- tu is pronounced as 'soo' in the northern Gilberts and as 'too' in the south
- w is pronounced as English 'v' when followed by e.

Ellice

There are sixteen sounds in the Ellice language — a, e, i, o, u, f, h, k, l, m, n, ng, p, s, t and v. Each vowel and consonant has a short and a long duration; every syllable ends in a vowel.

p, t and k are non-aspirated when short and aspirated when long. All vowels are separate sounds even when in the same syllable.

Glossary

Gilbertese

<i>aba</i>	— a defined plot of land
<i>babai</i>	— <i>Cyrtosperma chamissonis</i> — a large tuberous plant which grows in stagnant water; not unlike giant <i>taro</i> in appearance (known as <i>pulaka</i> in the Ellice Islands)
<i>bangota</i>	— sacred place, shrine, used for spirit worship and sorcery
<i>boti</i>	— (also called <i>inaki</i> on some islands) a division or sitting-place within the <i>maneaba</i> allocated to members of a <i>kainga</i>
<i>buakonikai</i>	— bush land(s)
<i>bubuti</i>	— solicitation of goods or services, with the implication of reciprocity
<i>eiriki</i>	— relationship, sometimes involving sexual intercourse, between a man and his wife's sisters and (in some cases) cousins; or a woman and the brothers and cousins of her husband
<i>I Kiribati</i>	— Gilbertese person or people (adopted since independence)
<i>I Matang</i>	— European
<i>inaomata</i>	— commoner or freeman, landowner
<i>kai(n)</i>	— inhabitant, member— <i>Kain Tarawa</i> = person(s) of Tarawa; implies 'belonging' (i.e. more than simple residence)
<i>kainga</i>	— a hamlet, the extended family settlement and the people within it; the basic social and residential unit before the creation of consolidated villages in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
<i>kamaimai</i>	— boiled coconut sap
<i>kaubure</i>	— (local government) councillor; a borrowing from the Ellice <i>kaupule</i>
<i>kaunga</i>	— slave or servant, one without land
<i>kawa</i>	— subsidiary village to <i>kainga</i> ; now the general term for village
<i>Kiribati</i>	— name adopted for the republic composed of the Gilbert, Phoenix and Line Islands and Banaba
<i>maneaba</i>	— communal meeting house
<i>mronron</i>	— literally 'round'; a private trading co-operative

Glossary

<i>mwenga</i>	— house, dwelling
<i>nikiranroro</i>	— literally 'the one remaining from her generation'; an old maid, an unmarried woman known to have had sexual relationships, divorce
<i>tia motiki-taeka</i>	— <i>maneaba</i> spokesman responsible for expressing decision or concensus
<i>tinaba</i>	— relationship, sometimes involving sexual intercourse and gifts of land, between a woman and the uncles of her husband
<i>toka</i>	— minor chief, rich landowner, social rank below <i>uea</i> in northern Gilberts
<i>uma ni mane</i>	— the men's house; in practice the small meeting house within each <i>kainga</i>
<i>uea</i>	— high chief, applies particularly to the northern Gilberts
<i>unimane</i>	— (wise and respected) old man
<i>utu</i>	— kindred, family or relatives (in the widest sense)

Ellice

<i>aahinga</i>	— term used for <i>maneapa</i> in the northern Ellice
<i>aumaga</i>	— young men's club
<i>faatele</i>	— traditional dance
<i>faipule</i>	— councillor (adopted from Samoan)
<i>fakangaamua</i>	— community land
<i>fono o aliki</i>	— village council
<i>kaitasi</i>	— literally 'eat as one'; lands worked and owned together
<i>kaupule</i>	— (local government) councillor (sometimes <i>kaupuli</i>)
<i>mana</i>	— supernatural power bestowed by the gods and the status that followed from the possession of this power
<i>maneapa</i>	— communal meeting house; from the Gilbertese <i>maneaba</i> (sometimes <i>aahinga</i> in the northern Ellice)
<i>puikaainga</i>	— extended family settlement
<i>pulaka</i>	— <i>Cyrtosperma Chamissonis</i> — a large tuberous plant which grows in stagnant water; not unlike giant taro in appearance (known as <i>babai</i> in the Gilberts)
<i>tupu</i>	— chief (used particularly in the southern Ellice)
<i>Tuvalu</i>	— 'cluster of eight' or 'eight together'; the name now given to the Ellice Islands
<i>ulu aliki</i>	— chief (used particularly in the northern Ellice)
<i>vaevae</i>	— individually owned land

Note on currency and measurement

Before the Second World War the Colony used Sterling as its currency; after the war Australian currency was adopted and, following Australia, decimalisation took place in 1967. To minimise confusion all amounts have been converted to £ Sterling for the pre-war period and \$ Australian for the post-war years.

Where possible weights and measurements have been expressed in metric terms but where this would cause confusion (as in any description of pre-war phosphate negotiations) imperial measurement has been retained.

Abbreviations

ABCFM	—American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
BPC	—British Phosphate Commissioners
Cd, Cmd, Cmnd	—Command Papers (within GBPP)
CO	—Colonial Office
DO	—District Officer
EID	—Ellice Islands District
FO	—Foreign Office
FOCP	—Foreign Office Confidential Print
GBPP	—Great Britain Parliamentary Papers
GEIC	—Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony
GID	—Gilbert Islands District
LMS	—London Missionary Society
MSC	—Missionaires du Sacré Coeur
NZ, AJHR	—New Zealand, Appendices to the Journals, House of Representatives
PMB	—Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Manuscript Series
PMB DOC	—Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Printed Materials Series
QVP	—Queensland, Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings
RNAS	—Royal Navy, Australia Station
SSJ	—London Missionary Society, South Sea Journals
SSL	—London Missionary Society, South Sea Letters
SSR	—London Missionary Society, South Sea Reports
WA	—New Zealand, War Archives
WPHC	—Western Pacific High Commission

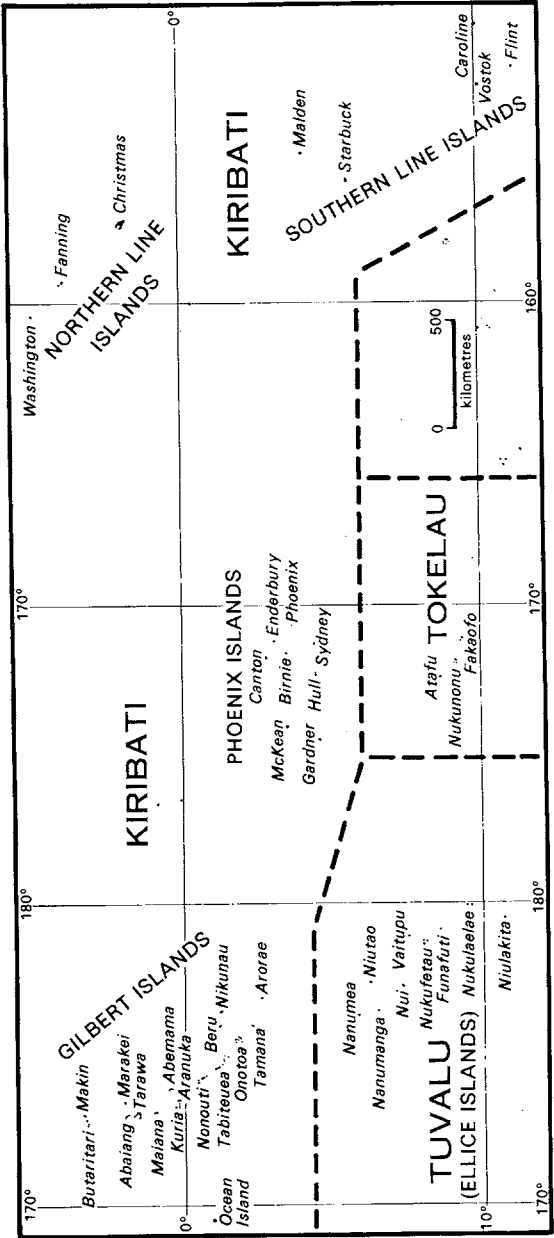
CHAPTER ONE

The islands and their people

I Kiribati and Tuvaluans still cherish myths which describe the creation of their lands and ancestors by revered deities and the heroic exploits of forebears who explored and settled the islands of the central Pacific. While the creation stories are not in accordance with scientific explanations there are many legends which support and supplement modern views on the prehistory of this remote island world.¹

Reconstructions of the settlement of Oceania indicate that New Guinea, Australia and parts of island Melanesia were first populated some 50 000 years ago. Then, about 8000 years ago, horticultural techniques that had been developed in Southeast Asia were carried into Melanesia and Micronesia by peoples who, despite other diversities, all spoke languages belonging to a common family now called Austronesian. Many of these new settlers brought or acquired seafaring skills and in epic voyages, whether accidental or planned, gradually spread throughout Oceania. By combining this modern information with oral traditions it is possible to give some account, albeit a highly speculative one, of the prehistory of the central Pacific area.

The first settlers to reach the Gilbert Islands came from the west and were small, black, and frizzy-haired; it is probable that they travelled via the Caroline and Marshall Islands and that they were related to the first Austronesian-speakers to reach Melanesia. Centuries later they were overtaken and later dominated by new arrivals, also from the west, who were taller in stature and lighter in colour. It was this latter group, who reached the Gilberts perhaps some 4000 or 5000 years ago, who gave the basic shape and form to Gilbertese society. Their language was of an Austronesian type known as Eastern Oceanic which has close affiliations with the languages found in the Banks Islands in north Vanuatu. It has been common to assume that the explanation for this lies in a migration from southern Melanesia to the Gilberts, but the linguistic evidence now available suggests that the reverse may have been the case and that the ancestors of at least some of those we now call Melanesians reached their islands via Micronesia. This latter explanation is the more likely given the prevailing winds and currents and it is a feat that has been repeated in recent times by canoes that have been blown away from the Gilberts and have reached the outer fringes of Melanesia. At least 3500 years ago, there was a subsequent movement from southern Melanesia to the Fiji-Tonga



Map 2 Islands of the Central Pacific

region. Here, the distinctive language and culture of Polynesia evolved before it was carried through Samoa to the eastern Pacific and as far as Hawaii, Easter Island and New Zealand.² Interestingly enough, Gilbertese myths tell of migrations from the Gilberts to Samoa (though by a more direct route) and, after many generations, a subsequent return along the ancestral migration trail. According to genealogical evidence this influx of Samoans, which is regarded as a major event in Gilbertese history, took place in the 14th century.³ But while there are clear indications of some Polynesian influences in Gilbertese culture there are much closer links with the Micronesians to the north, with whom the Gilbertese had continuing contact, than with the Samoans to the southeast.

The origins of the Ellice Islanders lie in Polynesia. Their islands were settled as part of a westwards backwash movement from established Polynesian communities. It has been suggested that the Ellice Islands were links in a migration chain stretching from Southeast Asia, through Micronesia to Polynesia, but there is no evidence to suggest pre-Polynesian settlement in this area. Both legends and language indicate a predominantly Samoan origin with, however, significant Tongan influence in the northern islands. There are traditions which suggest there were also subsequent arrivals from the Tokelau, Cook and Gilbert groups and from Futuna and Rotuma. The evidence that is available suggests settlement dates for the various islands ranging from the early 14th century to the mid-17th century.⁴

From whichever direction they came, the first settlers in the Gilbert and Ellice groups lived a precarious existence until they had come to terms with the barrenness of the islands on which they found themselves. An altitude of less than five metres combined with sandy soils and a sparse and inconsistent rainfall often caused an extreme shortage of food and fresh water. Before the introduction of roof catchment and tank storage there was a total dependence on wells sunk to the depth of the narrow fresh-water lens which is usually found between two and three metres below the surface. The soils are so poor that few plants will grow.⁵ In the southern Gilbert group rainfall is significantly lower than in the islands north of the Equator or those in the Ellice group, thus making survival even more difficult. The basic crops of many other parts of Pacific—*taro*, bananas, pawpaws and yams, for example—were either not introduced or were eliminated by drought. The only root crop cultivated by the Gilbertese was *babai* (*Cyrtosperma chamissonis*)—a plant which is similar in appearance to the giant *taro* but takes several years to mature and has to be grown in pits deep enough to allow the tops of the tubers to be covered by stagnant water. On some of the more fertile islands *babai* may have been a staple food but generally it was a luxury and kept for special occasions. This crop was also grown in the Ellice Islands where it was known as *pulaka*. There, the better soils and higher rainfall also allowed the cultivation of *taro*.

In both groups of islands coconut palms dominate the vegetation and the coconut was the most important food item. In the Gilberts not only the fruit was used but also the sap which could be tapped from the end of a spathe after the young nuts had been severed from it. The 'sweet toddy' so obtained was a basic part of the Gilbertese diet and had a sufficiently high nutritional value for it to be used as a breast-milk substitute for infants. Fresh toddy could be boiled to the consistency of molasses and stored for long periods but when left untouched for more than a day it began to ferment and become a powerful intoxicant. The use of this 'sour toddy' as a beverage, however, is a relatively recent innovation usually credited to a Butaritari beachcomber in the 1830s.⁶ In the early 19th century the breadfruit, so common elsewhere in the Pacific, was found in significant quantities only on the more fertile islands in the north and centre of the group and its productivity was frequently affected by drought.⁷ On many Pacific Islands the pandanus tree was, and is, used as a source of raw materials for house building and in the manufacture of durable mats, garments and thatch, but only in eastern Micronesia are living conditions so harsh that the fibrous fruit is eaten in significant quantities. Although segments of the fruit can be chewed like sugar cane and used in the preparation of various dishes, the importance of the pandanus lay in its value as a drought food. Dried pandanus pulp and powder can be kept for many years and it was stored for special occasions, for sea voyages, and for times of scarcity. Pandanus seeds can survive a lengthy immersion in salt-water and this suggests the possibility that the pandanus may have been established in the islands before the arrival of the first settlers and may have assumed its fundamental dietary role in the initial stages of human settlement while coconuts and other introduced plants were becoming established. If these early migrants set out from their homelands with pigs, dogs or poultry these were eliminated by the journey or by the harsh environment.

When food became scarce on land, the Islanders became even more dependent on the sea. To exploit this resource, and to facilitate inter-island voyaging, they developed a high level of canoe-building and navigation skills.⁸ Coral reefs provided various types of shell fish, octopus and lobsters which could be gathered at low tide. At high-water smaller varieties of fish could be caught in nets and, at certain seasons, there were community fish drives, usually conducted at night by the light of flares. On most islands tidal fish traps were laboriously constructed from blocks of coral. The lagoons within the encircling reefs of the atolls offered further opportunities for fishing in relative safety and became especially important during the period of westerly storms from November to March. On the reef islands, however, those which have no lagoons, deep-sea fishing could be difficult in rough weather and it was to guard against privations of this sort that surplus fish were salted and dried. No produce, whether from the land or from the sea, was wasted. The Gilbertese and the Ellice Islanders exploited

their environment in its totality and their cultures evolved in harmony with it. Of necessity, a delicate balance between man and nature was retained.

The cultural patterns which had emerged in Oceania by the 19th century were a reflection of the environment and of the contributing cultures as they had been modified by developments in the post-settlement period. It is not possible to unravel the evolutionary phases of this cultural transformation nor even to describe in a definitive fashion Pacific Islands cultures as they were when Europeans first made contact with them. Early European observers were transients who did not understand the indigenous languages and saw only fleeting glimpses of the local lifestyle. And, even at this early stage, they were themselves causing ripples of change. These qualifications notwithstanding, there is little evidence to suggest that change was rapid or dramatic. Rather, Pacific Islanders learned how to adapt and adopt the ideologies, lifestyles and technologies of outsiders but always in such a way that the essence of their own cultural identity was preserved. Thus by consulting the traditions of the people, and by drawing on the observations of foreign observers, a basic reconstruction is possible.

While it is not particularly difficult to assess the overall scale of Gilbertese and Ellice societies, there are obvious difficulties in the way of any attempt to estimate precisely the pre-European populations. And while some approximation of numbers might be arrived at, any more detailed analysis is clearly impossible. It seems likely, however, that by the 19th century population levels were relatively static with an optimum being maintained by deliberate policies of control combined with the natural selection imposed by the environment in general and by drought in particular. Warfare was relatively insignificant as a factor in population control in traditional society; so fine was the balance between population and resources, however, that a drought of more than a few months' duration led to deaths through starvation and an increase in the incidence of abortion. In general the smaller communities of the Ellice Islands maintained an average family size of two children. Families were larger in the Gilbert Islands and their size was usually determined by individual circumstances and initiatives and only seldom by imposed community norms.

Early population estimates by European observers are unreliable and, generally, much too high. For example, Horatio Hale, ethnographer with the United States Exploring Expedition which visited the Gilbert Islands in 1841, estimated their combined population on one occasion at 60 000, on another at 85 000. Both were mere guesses based on information gathered from two beachcombers and the Expedition's own observations at the few islands visited, all of which were in the north and centre of the group.⁹ Richard Randell, a resident trader on Butaritari, suggested a total of 46 500 in 1852 and one of 50-54 000 a decade later. By this time Randell was well acquainted with the northern Gilberts where his business interests

were greatest, but he was less familiar with the south. Much more reliable overall is the estimate of 30-35 000 put forward in 1855 by Ichabod Handy, a whaler-trader who knew most islands in the group.¹⁰ In 1892, when the islands became a British protectorate, the population was estimated at about 26 500 but over the preceding half-century there had been depopulation caused by labour recruiting, disease and by an intensification of warfare on some islands. Taking into account the resources of the various islands, the known extent of depopulation, and the available estimates, it is reasonable to suggest that the population of the Gilbert Islands before significant changes had been induced by European contact was between 31 500 and 35 100.¹¹ Tabiteuea, with over 5000, was the most populous island; Abaiang, Tarawa, Abemama, and Nonouti all had between 2500 and 3500; Butaritari-Makin, Marakei, Beru, Nikunau and Onotoa had between 1500 and 2500; Aranuka, Kuria, Tamana and Arorae had fewer than 1500 people.

For the Ellice Islands it is possible to be rather more precise. The numbers involved are much smaller, there was less labour recruiting than in the Gilberts and there was very little warfare. Moreover, from the 1860s there were regular missionary observations and statistical records of population trends. Nanumea, Niutao and Vaitupu had populations of between 400 and 500; Nanumanga, Nui, Funafuti and Nukulaelae had about 300 each; and Nukufetau about 250. From this probable population of some 2800 there was a drop to fewer than 2500 in 1863 as a result of recruiting raids on Funafuti, Nukulaelae and Nanumea. Over the next three decades the population slowly increased to about 3000 largely because of the virtual elimination of infanticide and abortion in response to mission teaching.

The social and political systems which evolved in the Gilbert Islands in pre-European times reflected the limits inherent in the environment as well as the blending of the principles and practices introduced by the original settlers and by subsequent arrivals.¹² Politically, the main implication of the Samoan influx in the 14th century was the introduction of hierarchical principles into societies which, the evidence from land tenure studies would suggest, were characterised by individualism to the extent that both men and women inherited and owned land. The basic social groupings of chiefs (*uea*), nobles (*toka*), freemen (*inaomata*) and slaves (*kaunga*) were preserved until the European era on Butaritari and Makin in the far north but on all the islands to the south there were modifications in various degrees made in the 17th century by marauding armies led by Kaitu of Beru and Uakeia of Nikunau. The socio-political system they attempted to implant played down the principle of hierarchy in favour of gerontocracy—the rule of island districts by councils of old men. On the islands south of the Equator they were largely successful while in the north they managed to place some limitations upon chiefly power.

In pre-European times the Gilbertese did not live in the large consolidated villages which now characterise their islands. The basic

residential unit was the *kainga*—a hamlet, sometimes walled for privacy, within which a number of related extended families lived in separate *mwenga*, or households. The most common type of house had a raised floor which served as an open living space although for privacy or during bad weather it could be closed off with mats. Above this, supported on poles, was an enclosed upper-room used for sleeping. The roof, like the roofs on all Gilbertese buildings, was thatched with dried pandanus leaves. Within the *kainga* there was also a bleaching house in which young girls were secluded and sheltered from the sun before puberty, a covered area for food preparation, a food storage enclosure, and a small meeting-house called the *uma ni mane*, or the men's house, which was used on ceremonial and social occasions and also served as the focus of *kainga* life.

On the bush (usually the eastern) side of the settlement there was a *bangota* or shrine to the ancestral gods or spirits recognised by the *kainga*. The *bangota* was a shaded, gravelled enclosure which had a large block of coral as its dominant feature. A clam shell served as a receptacle for the gifts—usually of food—which were offered when the gods were being worshipped or their assistance sought. Although there was no defined priesthood it was customary for one family from within the *kainga* to lead worship and to interpret the natural signs—changes in winds and clouds, for example—which were seen as conveying messages from the gods. The various gods and spirits of human ancestors who were revered were believed to have considerable influence over the lives of their followers and also—for good or evil—over others, providing the appropriate incantations and ritual preparations of leaves, food, hair and similar objects were carried out. Each *kainga* also had a totemic object—fish and birds were most common—which its members did not hunt or eat.

On all islands except Makin and Butaritari, each *kainga* was associated with a *maneaba* or meeting-house. Together with subsidiary *kawa* which had been established when the original settlements had become overcrowded, the *kainga* of a district were usually scattered along the western, or lagoon, side of an island with most being in close proximity to the *maneaba*. The *maneaba* was a large rectangular peaked roof, sometimes more than thirty metres in length and half as wide, set on low coral pillars. It was the social and political centre of its district and also served as a temporary residence for visitors who had no close kin in the district. Within the *maneaba*, each *kainga* had a defined sitting place called a *boti* or *inaki*. The oldest male of the *kainga* was usually its head and also its leading spokesman. Although wilful movement from one *boti* to another was not permitted, an individual was entitled to take his place in any *boti* to which he could trace his descent through the male line and, under some circumstances, could be invited into another. There was also a *boti* for strangers. A man usually took his place in his father's *boti*, a woman in her husband's. In the southern Gilberts some *boti* leaders were regarded with greater sanctity than others and some *kainga* were,

at least in a practical or military sense, more powerful than their neighbours. On both these grounds the *Karongoa n Uea* clan which traced its descent back to Samoa often assumed, and was recognised as having, a degree of precedence. In essence, however, the various *boti* and the *kainga* they represented were seen as approximately equal, though competing, elements of a single district community. A man with military prowess might rise to a position of prominence but his leadership was transitory; there was no place for a chiefly dynasty in the southern Gilberts.

There was a general prohibition of marriages contracted between members of the same *boti* and, in addition, any sexual relationship between persons more closely related than fourth cousins was regarded as incestuous and punishable by death. The only exception to this rule was in the northern Gilberts where marriages between close kin were permissible for the chiefly élite. In most cases residence was established in the husband's *kainga*, although overcrowding, a shortage of males in the wife's family, or the prospect of increased land inheritance might lead to residence with the wife's father or with a grandparent of either partner. Except for the chiefly families of the northern Gilberts, marriage was monogamous but this did not confine the legitimate sexual activities of any person to a single union. A man's sisters-in-law were his potential sexual partners under an *eiriki* relationship. On some islands it was customary also when the eldest daughter married for one or more of her younger sisters to accompany her as concubines to her husband (especially when the wife was pregnant or nursing a child) and to assist in the household. The *tinaba* relationship that existed between a man and the wives of his sons or his brothers' sons could also lead to a sexual relationship but in these cases usually involved gifts of considerable value. Under both these customs there were equivalent ties between a man and his wife's mother and her mother's sisters but these led less frequently to sexual relationships. Divorce proceedings could be initiated by either partner. The severing of a marriage relationship was a relatively simple process with the main concern being to protect the interests of any children through the distribution of the parents' lands. On occasions a wronged partner, if there was one, might also receive a compensatory payment of land. A divorced woman usually acquired the status of *nikiranroro* or 'the one remaining of her generation'. She was not subjected to the same controls as married women or unmarried virgins and unless she remarried usually spent the rest of her life in a series of liaisons with both the married and unmarried men of the village. Also sharing this same status were girls who had become pregnant before marriage, had acquired a reputation for promiscuity, or had been rejected from a marriage agreement because they had been found not to be virgins.

Where possible, disputes amongst *kainga* members were kept out of the *maneaba* but when two or more *kainga* were concerned *maneaba* involvement was usually inevitable. When participants refused to

accept the arbitration of the *unimane*, or old men, recourse to arms would follow. As a general rule, violence was more common between than within *maneaba* districts. In many matters—for example in land disputes, or over insults real or imagined—individuals rather than armies fought for supremacy.

In the islands stretching northwards from the equator to Marakei, the chiefly system survived the depredations of Kaitu and Uakeia although *maneaba* councils became an important restraint on chiefly power. In most cases one *kainga* in each district assumed a pre-eminent position although in practice its leader was more of a warlord than a paramount chief. The *maneaba* existed with a *boti* arrangement parallel to that of the southern islands but district government tended to revolve around the chief rather than the *maneaba* council. Wars in the pursuit of land and power were common and on Abemama-Kuria-Aranuka, and to a lesser extent on Abaiang, centralised leadership emerged. On Abemama and its two satellite islands, however, this authority was only consolidated by a monopoly of trade and its rewards (including firearms) in the 19th century, while on Abaiang a paramount chief did not emerge until after European contact and his power was only effective and unchallenged for brief periods.

The strong centralised chiefship that unified Butaritari and Makin was an exception in the Gilbert Islands. The paramount chief and his affiliates enjoyed considerable power over life and property. There were only four *boti*, one each for the family of the high chief, the freemen, the slaves, and for strangers. In the late 18th century the substitution of one chiefly line for another produced not only a complex authority structure but also an intricate system of land tenure. While the high chief did not own land in the usual sense, he nonetheless enjoyed rights, acknowledged by tribute, over all land and *babai* pits. While the ownership of most land remained vested in commoner families, possession of the land, and its produce, was henceforth shared with aristocratic families who held ill-defined residual rights.¹³

On all other islands to the south, the pattern of land tenure was different; there were minor variations in detail but the essence of the system was common to all.¹⁴ The *boti* was only a land-holding unit in so far as the *kainga* settlement was concerned; in addition, some *kainga* also controlled access to fish ponds and traps and the produce of defined segments of ocean and lagoon reef. All *buakonikai* or bush areas were divided into defined plots each known as a 'land' (*te aba*). All holdings were individually owned and could be as large as several acres or so small as to contain only a handful of trees or, perhaps, none at all. Generally speaking, land could only be inherited by members of an *utu*, or kindred. Within this group both men and women inherited land and *babai* pits from their mothers and their fathers although sons received more than daughters and the older children more than the younger. Thus an individual's lands could be

scattered throughout one or more islands depending on the marriages of his forebears. Inheritance was not the only form of land transference. A child might be given land by his or her adoptive parents for example or, conversely, the adopter might be given land by the real parents to assist in providing for the child. It was also common for a man to give his daughter's father-in-law a piece of land to ensure the welfare of his child. Land could also be transferred in payment for special services—healing, for example, or in return for food given during a time of drought or for sexual favours under a *tinaba* relationship.

Because it was the most precious resource, land was also exacted for compensation or seized as a punishment. Disputes arising out of serious insults or offences could only be settled by blood or with land. In theory, murderers, seducers and thieves could be killed by those whom they had offended, or their indebtedness (but not necessarily the dishonour) might be erased by the transference of land. In practice, too, this was often the case, but the outcome of any incident of this nature could also be materially affected by the relative strength of the parties concerned. Given the scattered nature of Gilbertese land-holdings some confusion and many disputes were inevitable especially where absentee ownership occurred; it was a relatively simple matter to move a boundary stone or to assume possession of a seldom-used piece of land. In self-defence therefore, and to protect family resources, the old men had to know not only the name of every land held by members of their kindred but also a description of the land, its boundaries, and the history of its ownership back to antiquity. There was never any shortage of litigation nor of eloquent proponents of every possible point of view. It is not surprising that land disputes were, and are, at the heart of Gilbertese village politics. The significance and prevalence of disputes also helps to explain the Gilbertese people's knowledge of, and preoccupation with, their past.

Although Ocean Island (or Banaba) is not one of the Gilbert Islands in a geographical sense there are close cultural affinities between the Banabans and the Gilbertese; there are also significant differences between them. For example: the Banabans lived on a raised reef island that was even more drought-prone than the low-lying Gilberts and, perhaps because of this, the Banabans tended to place less emphasis than the Gilbertese on agriculture and more on fishing; linguistically, there are differences of vocabulary and pronunciation; the Banaban hamlet seems to have been a more flexibly defined social unit than its Gilbertese counterpart. Taken overall, however, there are many more similarities than differences; in principle and in detail the differences are no greater than those which can be found within the Gilbert group. Like the Gilbertese, the Banabans trace the first inhabitants of their island to an ancestral homeland in the west. Then some three or four hundred years ago there was, according to legend, a predominantly male invasion from Beru in the southern Gilberts. These arrivals and their descendants came to dominate four of the village districts on the

island, leaving the fifth to the original settlers. Most distinctions between the two groups were subsequently blurred by intermarriage. Each village district on Banaba had a chief, and a *maneaba* divided into *boti*; Banabans owned land individually as did the Gilbertese; in such matters as political organisation there were close parallels between Banaba and the northern Gilberts. From the earliest times through until the 20th century there was continuing contact, reciprocal influence, and intermarriage between Gilbertese and Banabans.¹⁵

In the Ellice group there had been a social revolution brought about by Protestant Christianity before any attempt was made to study the social organisation of even one of the islands. The most useful comments from the 19th century were made by European missionaries who were, however, usually in transit and had to rely on information collected or translated by Samoan pastors.¹⁶ In some respects Nui is an exception in the Ellice Islands. For centuries occasional groups of Gilbertese visited the group and most who wished to settle seem to have gravitated towards Nui. The result was a blending of cultures and a population which now speaks a dialect of Gilbertese. In most other respects, however, generalisations regarding social organisation can be made to include Nui as well as the other islands.

Ellice Islands society was hierarchical but not rigidly stratified. Commonly a chief (variously known as *tupu* or *ulu aliki*) headed a village district composed of a number of extended family households. The number of these districts, known as *puikaainga*, on any one island appears to have ranged between four and eight. Within the village there was a clan meeting house (generally known as an *aahinga*, or *maneapa*) closely surrounded by a cluster of rectangular thatched dwellings. On some islands, leadership of this community was confined to a single descent line with others of chiefly rank playing fixed supportive roles; on others, the leadership rotated among the leading families. Each village leader was usually followed in the hierarchy by an assistant who acted as executive and orator. There was a degree of social mobility in that chiefly status could be attained by achievement as well as by inheritance although such cases were rare and usually confined to great warriors. On all islands ineffectual leadership led to voluntary or enforced abdication. The chief was arbiter as much as leader and his power was by no means absolute; effective power often lay in a village council (*fono o aliki*). Most islands acknowledged a paramount leader who had ceremonial precedence in a council of chiefs but relatively little real authority; this position, too, might be shared among two or more families or confined to a single line. From time to time one district might succeed in extending its hegemony over its neighbours but there was no strong tradition of centralised authority.

Ideally, a single land unit was collectively owned and worked by the members of a *puikaainga* under a form of tenure known as *kaitasi* ('eat as one'); in practice, however, land-holding units were usually smaller than this and cut across *puikaainga* boundaries. Both males

and females inherited land but in practice a woman's rights usually became dormant once she had established residence in her husband's household. She retained residual rights, however, and these could be exercised if she chose to live in the *puikaainga* of her birth or if there were only female heirs to an estate. The management of family lands and the organisation of labour for working them, for fishing, and for other community tasks, was an important part of chiefly leadership. The produce of the land, the fruits of fishing expeditions, or any goods received through ceremonial presentation or exchange, were distributed among the component households according to status and need. Although lands were held in common they were not necessarily in a contiguous unit because plots of land could be transferred under a number of customary rules; for example, adopted children could inherit land subject to the approval of other joint owners of the land; strangers who settled on an island and became *de facto* members of a *puikaainga* might be left a portion of land; land might be given or exchanged to mark a betrothal, or it could be given to a sorcerer, priest or healer whose ministrations had proved effective. Land could also be transferred as compensation for murder or theft. Although land acquired in these ways might be intended for an individual it was generally treated as part of the family lands because all heirs, actual and potential, had residual rights. The last hundred years have seen the emergence of two other forms of tenure: *vaevae*, or individual tenure, and *fakangaamua* or community (as distinct from family) land.¹⁷

In former times natural phenomena and ancestors were both important in the Ellice Islander's spiritual world. It was believed that with appropriate rituals, such elements as the sun, the winds, the tides, the sea and the rain could be influenced and used for the benefit of man. Natural signs like lightning, cloud formations, and the behaviour of birds were interpreted by the priests and the prophets and used by the sorcerers. Within each clan group, one or more households were recognised as forming a priesthood and were supported by the contributions of others. Ancestral gods were worshipped at a shrine which took the form of a small thatched hut in which were found the skulls of some revered ancestors and coral slabs representing others. Throughout the society, and justifying its hierarchical nature, there was a belief in *mana*—a supernatural power bestowed by the gods and confirmed by earthly rituals. The relative status of chiefs and the reverence with which they were treated depended on the degree to which they were seen as embodying and controlling *mana*.

Polygamy was widely practised by both chiefs and commoners. The number of wives taken depended less on status than on wealth, available resources and personal preference. Betrothal during childhood, or even before birth, was common for all social ranks. Marriage usually took place shortly after the girl, who was almost

invariably the younger partner, reached puberty. The marriage ceremony was an occasion for feasting and the exchange of goods (especially food and finely-woven mats) in which competitive display played an important role. Virginity was not particularly prized and discreet premarital liaisons were accepted as an inevitable part of the growing up process. Promiscuity was frowned upon, however, and tended to lessen a girl's chances of making a good marriage. On some islands marriage between fourth cousins was regarded as incestuous; on others, fourth cousins could marry but third cousins could not. Any man caught in an adulterous relationship with a chief's wife was likely to receive swift and summary punishment but for other social ranks it was not regarded as a particularly serious offence. Divorce, at the wish of either partner, was easily arranged. By common agreement families were kept small; two children were the norm on most islands. In some cases the first two children survived, in others it was the first of each sex. Abortion was practised but infanticide by drowning or suffocation was the most common form of birth control. Third and subsequent children were usually allowed to survive only if they were adopted by childless couples or by members of households where there were no young children to perform minor tasks.

Both the Ellice Islanders and the Gilbertese had learned to live within the limits imposed by their environment; they restricted the size of their families when conditions made this sensible and, on a community basis, maintained their populations at an optimum level. There was very little surplus production and whenever possible non-perishable foods were stored against drought and other hardships. In the 19th century this began to change. Europeans brought a new material culture, a new technology and new ideologies. The innovations eased the pressure on some resources but also generated new demands because there were few ways of acquiring the new luxuries, later to become necessities, except by the sale of items traditionally used for survival. The missions and the colonial government also added demands which were psychological as well as economic. The indigenous societies had never been static but had been living organisms constantly adjusting to changing circumstances but in the 19th century the forces of change were of an unprecedented range and magnitude. Traditional values and beliefs were upheld where possible, but modified when necessary; the Islanders were living in a new world.

CHAPTER TWO

Early contacts and the beginnings of trade

It was not until the 1820s that all the islands in the Gilbert and Ellice groups had been sighted by Europeans. Over the preceding three centuries the map of the central Pacific had gradually evolved but there were more sightings than contacts, and European knowledge of the peoples and cultures of the central Pacific was still minimal. But the very presence of these passing Europeans in their tall ships demonstrated the existence of a much wider world than the Islanders had ever imagined, and those who followed were ultimately, and inevitably, to transform customary lifestyles.¹

The first European visitors to the area were Spaniards seeking the fabled wealth of *Terra Australis Incognita*—the unknown southern continent which, they believed, served to balance the land masses of the northern hemisphere. In 1537 the crew of an expedition into the eastern Pacific killed their leader, Hernando de Grijalva, and sailed for the East Indies. During the journey, which only seven survived, they sighted Christmas Island (nearly 200 years before Cook's rediscovery) and Nonouti. Thirty years later several canoes were seen at Nui by Alvaro de Mendaña, and fires were lit on shore as the expedition passed the island. In 1595, on his second voyage, Mendaña sighted Niulakita, the uninhabited southernmost island of the Ellice group. Finding the surf too strong for a landing, Mendaña went on until he reached Santa Cruz where he and many of his companions perished in their attempt to establish a small colony. Quiros, chief pilot for Mendaña, returned with his own expedition in 1606 and, after an abortive attempt to settle on Espiritu Santo and convert the Islanders to Christianity, he sailed for Mexico, sighting Butaritari on the way.

The Islanders must have pondered on the origins of sailing vessels so unlike their own. If any of their speculations passed into oral tradition they were quickly lost, disbelieved perhaps, within a generation or two, for it was not until the late 18th century that the islands were again drawn in the orbit of European voyaging. Even the renewed enthusiasm of British and French explorers from the 1760s had left the region largely untouched because the outer limits of *Terra Australis* had, by this time, been fixed much further to the south and the search for the elusive continent remained at the centre of men's preoccupations until Cook finally dispelled the myth of its existence during his second voyage. Only one explorer from this era passed through the Gilberts: in 1765 the visit to Nikunau of Commodore

John Byron, commanding HMS *Dolphin*, was the occasion of the first known contact between Europeans and Gilbertese. The *Dolphin* was visited by more than sixty canoes; many Islanders went on board and demonstrated the 'thievish propensities'—which merely reflected a different perception of private property and a very natural curiosity—which were a constant source of irritation to Europeans in the early contact years. The Gilbertese showed no interest in trading and, far from offering hospitality and supplies, tried to make off with the coconuts that the ship had brought from Tokelau. In the Ellice group there was similarly brief contact at Niutao when a Spaniard, Don Francisco Mourelle, called at the island during a voyage from Manila to Mexico in 1781. Nanumea was also sighted, but not visited, on the same voyage.

Europeans' knowledge of the central Pacific developed most rapidly after the establishment of a penal colony at Botany Bay and the adoption of the 'outer passage' for the return voyage to Europe via Canton. Thomas Gilbert and John Marshall, in command of two of the first convict transports, sailed by this route after leaving Port Jackson in 1788. They were the first Europeans to see Aranuka, Kuria, Abaiang and Tarawa. Shipping in the area increased rapidly in the next few decades with the increasing traffic from Australia, the development of the fur trade and consequent shipping from the Americas to Canton, and the gradual growth of trade between South America and Europe via Calcutta. Vessels on these routes were the first to sight Tabiteuea and Abemama (1799), Ocean Island (1801), Tamana (1804), Arorae and Maiana (1809), Funafuti and Nukufetau (1819). In 1824 a French naval expedition under Captain Louis Duperrey sighted Marakei (although at the time it was confused with Abaiang) and Nanumanga which was confused with Niutao. With the spread of whaling in the central Pacific in the 1820s the positions of the remaining islands of both groups were noted and many of the ambiguities removed from earlier maps. Thus Nukulaelae (1821) and Vaitupu (1825) in the Ellice group and Onotoa, Beru and Tamana (1826) in the Gilberts were first recorded by whalers for European charts which, by the 1840s, had assumed their modern form.

In the 1820s Adam von Krusenstern, the Russian explorer and cartographer, brought together all known information on the Pacific in an atlas and a series of commentaries that were the best of their day. It was he who named the archipelago stretching from Makin to Arorae in the Gilbert Islands in recognition of the 1788 sightings by Gilbert and Marshall. The then known islands in the north of the group he called the Scarborough group after Marshall's vessel; those in the centre he called Simpson's group, using the name that Captain Charles Bishop of the *Nautilus* had given to Abemama in honour of Captain Roger Simpson of Canton; and, for reasons that are still obscure but related in some way to Bishop's visit to the group in 1799, he called the lesser-known islands of the south the Kingsmill group. In the publications of the United States Exploring Expedition, which had visited the Gilbert

and Ellice Islands in 1841, the name of the Kingsmill group was given to the whole archipelago; it was not until the 1860s that the term Gilbert Islands was accepted into common usage.²

In 1819 the ship *Rebecca*, under the command of Arent de Peyster, sailed from Valparaiso to Calcutta via the central Pacific. De Peyster sighted Nukufetau and after nearly being wrecked on Funafuti, called that island Ellice's Group (an allusion to the islets scattered around the lagoon) after Edward Ellice, an English Member of Parliament whose cargo he was carrying. Again, it was Charles Wilkes, Commander of the United States Exploring Expedition, who, in the map accompanying his narrative, extended the name Ellice Islands to cover all nine islands in the group.³

Before the 1820s contacts between Europeans and Islanders were so brief and infrequent that those who visited the islands were more important as heralds for the future than for any changes in island life directly attributable to their presence. Then, for several decades, the waters of the central Pacific were combed by whalers. By the 1840s there were more than 600 American vessels as well as smaller (and declining) numbers of British and Australasian vessels operating in the Pacific whaling industry. Honolulu was the most popular port for provisions and refitting but wherever they went the whalers sought supplies, crewmen, and the company of women. From Hawaii many ships steered for the equatorial grounds, which stretched as far westwards as Nauru, before heading north to Japan or the Arctic, or south to New Zealand. Thus the islands of the central Pacific became an important centre of whaling activity especially during the season from December to March when schools of migrating sperm whales were to be found in the area.⁴

Reflecting the overall fortunes of the whaling industry, trading contacts were sporadic before the mid-1830s, increased steadily to reach a peak twenty years later, and then declined until they had virtually ceased by 1870. In the 1840s and 1850s Ocean Island, Nikunau, Tamana and Arorae were visited at least weekly during the season and the sight of three or four vessels lying 'off and on' was not unusual. The other central and southern Gilbert Islands were visited less frequently while those in the north and in the Ellice group saw only a handful of vessels each year. The popularity of the southern islands owed much to their location; they were closest to the route followed from Hawaii and the absence of shoals made it possible to lie close in to the lee shore. These islands were also politically stable and it did not take long for an understanding to evolve between Islander and European; by the 1840s trade could be conducted with a minimum of time and bother. All these factors tended to compensate for the limited range of provisions available and, in any case, most vessels called at Rotuma, Ocean Island, Nauru or Ponape—where supplies were more plentiful (if more expensive)—within a few weeks of leaving the Gilberts.

Trade took place on ship rather than on shore; from the whalers' point of view it was quicker, much safer, and the initiative remained with them rather than with the Islanders. It was common for a ship to be surrounded by upwards of fifty canoes and to have four times that number of men, women and children on its decks. Trading was usually confined to the daylight hours; if more than a day was required the vessel usually stood off for the night for safety from reefs and from attack, and stood in to the shore again in the morning. Only occasionally, when firewood or water was required, or when a ship was very short of provisions, would a boat be sent to shore.

From the beginning, and throughout the period of whaling contacts, coconuts were the most important item of trade. They provided some variety in the diet of the crew and were also used to feed and fatten the pigs kept on board. Other coconut products were traded: *kamaimai* (boiled toddy), called molasses by the whalers; 'broom stuff', the dried lateral ribs of the leaves; and sennit, manufactured from the husks of dried nuts. There was also a rapid expansion of what might now be called a handicrafts industry with the sale of mats, hats, baskets, armour (woven from sennit), clubs and spears, shells and fish-hooks fashioned from shell and wood. Some items were used on board but others were traded as a sideline and taken home as souvenirs or shipped as 'curios' to Europe and America. At Ocean Island there was less emphasis on handicrafts and more on firewood, fish and vegetables (especially such introduced varieties as pumpkins and water-melons). By the 1840s poultry was being reared in the southern Gilberts from stock acquired from whalers and sales of 200 or more birds to a single vessel were soon commonplace.⁵ Pigs were also introduced by the whalers. Captain Plasket of the *Independence* made a present of two pigs to a chief of Vaitupu in 1826 and, whether from this stock or some other, pigs were in plentiful supply at the island by the mid-1840s and at most other islands by the 1850s.⁶ Animals were not always a welcome addition to an island's ecosystem. At Kuria, for example, the beachcomber John Kirby reported that pairs of ducks, pigs and goats introduced by a whaler had been the subject of supernatural fear and consequently slaughtered and thrown into the lagoon.⁷ For the most part pigs and poultry were reared as a commercial proposition (although cock fighting became a popular pastime) and it was not until after the whaling era that either assumed a significant place in the local diet. The spread of livestock in the northern islands was slower than in the south. The *Canton* apparently bought 'a few fowls' at Abaiang in 1852 but when Hiram Bingham, the pioneering missionary, landed on the island five years later there were neither pigs nor chickens to be seen although dogs (which had also been introduced by Europeans) were plentiful and were occasionally eaten.⁸ Sour toddy was sometimes taken off to ships but was not popular with most captains. By 1840 the beverage was being made on Butaritari, and by this time it was being sold in a distilled form to whalers calling at Nikunau, but it does not seem to have constituted any serious threat to the rum carried

on most vessels and the crews were seldom permitted the shore leave which would have given them an opportunity to sample the local brew.⁹

In the early years of trading, iron in any form was eagerly sought by the Islanders. Hoop iron, used in the manufacture of casks, was readily available and cheap, and generally proved popular because of its versatility. Its trading value could also be enhanced by a little time spent shaping lengths into crude knives and other implements. More specialised tools like plane irons (used for making adzes), axes, knives and files had a limited premium market beyond the reach of most villagers. Heavier tools were also introduced. Plasket of the *Independence* left a 'shuval' at Tamana in 1827¹⁰ and the flat round spade now used throughout the Gilberts for the cultivation of *babai* is a clear descendant of the 'whale spade' used for flensing. Whales' teeth, customarily used for personal adornment when they could be obtained, were also traded.

The most remarkable feature of the early years of trade was the creation, then explosion, of the demand for tobacco; even well-chewed wads from a 'spit-box' would be borne off in triumph. Articles that had taken weeks, even months, to make would willingly be exchanged for a stick or two of low grade twist and the demand became so great that it effectively lowered the prices of all commodities offered for sale. In the early 1840s tobacco was still unknown at Tarawa and on some of the other northern islands but by this time it had displaced all other items previously sought in the south, and its popularity undoubtedly slowed the introduction of other items like firearms, cloth, and sharp-edged tools that had become popular elsewhere in the Pacific.¹¹ Tobacco was smoked, chewed (and swallowed) by men, women and children in an orgy of mass addiction that had spread inexorably through the group by the late 1850s. At Tabiteuea in 1841 the United States Exploring Expedition found that:

Their chief desire was to obtain tobacco, of which they seem to be extravagantly fond...the cry was constantly 'tebake'...So eager were they after it, that when one had put a piece in his mouth, others would seize him, and actually force it out with their fingers.¹²

The situation had hardly changed half a century later when Robert Louis Stevenson boarded a trading vessel at Abemama and observed some of the wives of Tem Binoka, the high chief:

The display in the trade-room—hats, ribbons, dresses, scents, tins of salmon—the pride of the eye and the lust of the flesh—tempted them in vain. They had but one idea—tobacco, the island currency, tantamount to minted gold; returned to shore with it, burthened but rejoicing; and late into the night, on the royal terrace, were to be seen counting the sticks by lamp-light in the open air.¹³

Once the initial market for tobacco had been established the traders, finding it a compact cargo with a high profit margin, did little to encourage a diversification into other goods. Nor is there any indication that the Gilbertese wanted them to; their own explanation for their craving for tobacco was that it helped to dull the stomach pangs caused by a perpetual shortage of food.¹⁴ That may have been true in some instances but, as shown by the case of Tem Binoka's wives who were presumably well-fed, the level of addiction was high even when food was plentiful.

For the whalers, the availability of Gilbertese women was an important consideration and for some trading in provisions was incidental to the slaking of a sexual thirst acquired during several months at sea. One log-keeper noted that at Arorae the 'natives came on board with mats coconuts and girls to trade for tobacco' and attitudes to prostitution were typified by this businesslike approach.¹⁵ Lieutenant William Hudson of the United States Exploring Expedition was shocked to see, as he believed, '*fathers and brothers*—the anxious, pressing salesmen of their *daughters and sisters*' and even more distressed that the girls, some of them only thirteen or fourteen years of age, seemed 'no less anxious to be disposed of than their father or brother to negotiate the bargain for them and pocket—or rather basket—the proceeds.' These impressions were repeated by Wilkes in the published narrative of the expedition and thus Gilbertese women were collectively given a reputation for promiscuity that they did not deserve.¹⁶ Contrary to Hudson's impression, chastity was highly prized. Some of the women involved were *nikiranroro* who, even in pre-European times, supported themselves partly with gifts from lovers and were, in some measure, free agents. Others were slaves whose families were landless and in bondage for some crime or, on the northern islands, because they were regarded as the chattels of a powerful chief. While some women were under the direction of relatives or owners who may have pre-empted or shared the proceeds, others were enthusiastic entrepreneurs on their own account like the 'lady' at Nikunau who 'could satisfy all hands easy enough least she did several and wanted more for a head of tobacco a piece.' This rate of exchange, standard throughout the group, placed the cost of a woman's services on a par with the purchase of a mat, or a hat, or at half the price of a chicken.¹⁷ There might be hidden costs as well, as shown by a terse 'John Bafost off work with the pox' in the log of the *Canton Packet* after a visit to Tamana in 1852.¹⁸ It is impossible to assess the demographic effect of these relationships but it was probably much less than might be expected. Only a very small proportion of women were involved in prostitution—there was nothing to compare with the annual migration of Hawaiian women to the whaling ports—and, more importantly, a woman who became pregnant as the consequence of such a casual relationship probably would have sought an abortion from a skilled midwife. It is likely that the only children of European

paternity who would have been permitted to survive would have been born into a stable relationship or marriage.

Rather than making up their full complement from among the riff-raff of Sydney or Honolulu, some captains chose to recruit Pacific Islanders. Recruiting began in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in the 1820s but it did not become common until the 1840s. Most recruits worked only for a season but there were a few who remained with their ships until they were discharged in Sydney, Honolulu or the ports of New England to await a working passage home. Most were dubbed as they went on board and hence two men from Nikunau (then known to Europeans as Byron's Island) appeared in the ship's articles as Peter and Thomas Byron; others gloried in such names as Jefferson Davis, John Brown, Spun yarn Tim, Bob, Jack and Towser.¹⁹ The numbers involved were not large, perhaps no more than a hundred or two over a thirty-year period, but they were the first participants in a labour migration that was to become, and to remain, a dominant feature of the life of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. Their observations and experience, shared with their fellow Islanders, made them as important as agents of change as the Europeans who chose to settle in the islands.

A dislike for hard work, a brutal captain, verminous living conditions, or an apparent abundance of accommodating women on shore were just some of the factors influencing Europeans who deserted or sought their discharge in the islands. Some captains chose to pay off any men who wanted to go on shore rather than having to endure them as an irritant and cause of future trouble. Entries like 'Discharged Henry Evans by his own request and sent him ashore' (at Arorae, 1854) or 'Discharged George Bridges [at Nikunau, 1862] he wishing to go on shore' are not uncommon in whalers' logs, but parting was not always as congenial.²⁰ After several weeks at sea during which time a number of the crew had been flogged or confined in irons, the captain of the *Roman II* allowed seven trouble-makers ashore at Nikunau in 1851. And at Ocean Island one crewman on the *Prudent* who refused to work until and unless he was allowed to visit the shore was put in the rigging, given twelve lashes 'which Tatoed his back in curious manner', and left behind with only the clothes he was wearing.²¹ Most men intent on leaving their ships did not wait for a blessing from their captain and desertion was the most common beginning to a period of residence ashore. Some captains accepted the inevitable and simply set sail, or shipped a replacement off the beach in the knowledge that a man's wages had been added to his profits. Others, more concerned with discipline, tried to capture and chastise the runaway. One Robert Cole deserted from the *Howard* at Nikunau in 1843 and embarked on a trading career. However he failed to recognise his former ship when it returned to the island several months later and was promptly seized, given seven dozen lashes, and detained on board.²² Wary of venturing ashore, some captains offered rewards. At Tamana in 1853 two days delay and the offer of a reward

proved fruitless for one captain, while at Arorae in 1867 a box of tobacco was sufficient for another to secure the apprehension and return of two deserters. And it was no doubt in anticipation of compensation for their efforts that the Abaiang Islanders tied up and returned a deserter from the *Belle* even before any attempt had been made to pursue him.²³

While a few Europeans remained for several years, or even a lifetime, in the islands, most moved on within a year or two. There were frequent opportunities to sign on with passing ships or to work a passage to the nearest port town. Thus there was a constant turnover in the membership of these small European settlements, few of which ever had more than a dozen members at any given time, although there were more than a score of beachcombers on Abemama, Kuria and Aranuka when Tem Baiteke ordered their elimination in 1851. At about the same time there were '10 or 12 white men' on Ocean Island but their numbers had only recently been swelled by six men from the *Enterprise* who, having deserted, sold one of their former ship's boats to the next whaler to pass. At Tabiteuea, seven Europeans were trading on a co-operative basis in 1853 but this represented a peak in their numbers and except for Nikunau, often the first port of call for ships sailing along the Line from Honolulu, most islands had a lower European population.²⁴

Most of the Europeans contented themselves with a life of idleness interspersed with trading the products of a 'wife's' estate in sufficient quantities to obtain tobacco, liquor and other necessities of life. Wittingly or unwittingly they demonstrated the mores of an alien culture and, for good or ill, were an important influence upon their hosts. Generally their own preservation, and a perceived bond with their fellow Europeans on board ships, made them honest middlemen and interpreters. However their presence in this role was seldom required because a number of Islanders, especially those who had worked on whalers themselves, were soon sufficiently proficient in English to conduct their own trade. In any case, trade was adequately carried on without the benefit of language with the Gilbertese 'holding up in one hand the article for sale and then holding up the fingers of the other hand to indicate how many heads or plugs... of tobacco they wanted in exchange.'²⁵

Harmonious and continuing trade was obviously in the interests of both parties but understandings took a little time to evolve. When the US Schooner *Dolphin*, in pursuit of the mutineers of the whaler, *Globe*, reached Nikunau in 1826, the Islanders swarmed on to her decks and the crew had difficulty in coping with their 'disposition to thievery and violence'. There was a brief skirmish and a stolen musket was recovered only after the Islanders had been intimidated with a demonstration of cannon-power.²⁶ In 1841 the United States Exploring Expedition had similar difficulties at Tabiteuea where the crew of the *Peacock* were manhandled and had their pockets picked and one of their number was killed when he tried to enter an enclosure

reserved for the women of its owner's family. In reprisal, an armed party of eighty men was sent on shore to fire the village and met a hostile crowd which showed a clear intention of attacking the ship's boats until driven back by rifle fire which, apparently, they had not witnessed before.²⁷

The people of Tabiteuea, and its neighbour Nonouti, soon had a not altogether deserved reputation for treachery and violence. John Anderson, the murdered man from the *Peacock*, was treated exactly as a Gilbertese would have been in like circumstances, and most of the later attacks on other vessels involved a similar attempt to uphold Gilbertese customs and to impose them upon visitors. No doubt there were occasions when an attack on an unwary or vulnerable vessel was seen as a chance for quick wealth but it was much more important that the Gilbertese, in common with many other peoples of Oceania, claimed absolute title to flotsam and jetsam and this included any 'foreign' canoe or ship that ran ashore or was wrecked, its contents, and the personal possessions of any crew members who might be fortunate enough to reach the beach. Any person, European or otherwise, who resisted the exercise of these rights was summarily killed. After the *Corsair* was wrecked at Tabiteuea in 1835 her captain and some of her crew were killed upon landing while others who established an armed camp had to repel attackers before sailing to Guam in their ship's boats.²⁸ In 1853 the crew of the *Rodolph* were killed at south Tabiteuea and the ship burned to the water-line but it is not clear whether the ship was cut-off or wrecked before the massacre.²⁹ The latter is the more likely because the Tabiteueans did not treat all visitors in this fashion. In the 1840s several whalers called at the island, were met by a 'great number' of canoes, and traded without being or feeling threatened; in 1848 the *Omega* even bought several articles from a vessel that had been wrecked on the island a year earlier.³⁰

Nonouti had a similar history. The *Columbia* was wrecked on the island in 1845 and, perhaps because the crew gave up their ship and all possessions, and even suffered themselves to be stripped, no lives were taken and they were redeemed three weeks later, with tobacco, by the captain of the *Chandler Price*.³¹ The so-called *Triton* massacre of 1848 was largely responsible for the island's sinister reputation, yet the ringleader in the incident was Manuel, a Portuguese who had apparently remained after the wreck of the *Columbia*. Having lured the captain and a boat's crew ashore to buy a salvaged fluke chain he then attempted to take the ship with Gilbertese help. Several of the attackers, including Manuel, were killed and the mate, believing his captain dead, sailed for Tahiti. Captain Spencer was still on shore, however, and together with his men was rescued two weeks later by the *Alabama* and the *United States* without, it would appear, their lives having been threatened in the interim. Once safe, however, Spencer shot and killed two Islanders, and wounded several others. Two days later, when the *Alabama* was again in sight of the island, and canoes

came off to trade, her captain 'fired upon them and wounded several'.³² Despite such incidents the whalers continued to visit Nonouti regularly and even the *Alabama* returned to trade peacefully in the following year.³³ It was no doubt with this incident in mind that the crew of the *Flying Fox* made for Abemama in their boats when their ship was wrecked on the island in 1850.³⁴ There was a further incident involving the *Charles W. Morgan* at Nonouti in 1851 but the evidence suggests that the captain panicked at the sight of a large number of canoes coming off, assumed their intentions to be murderous, refused to trade, and ordered an unprovoked attack on any who came near the ship.³⁵ Not all contacts at these islands were violent and in many cases it was the actions of Europeans, rather than any Gilbertese predisposition to treachery, that sparked misunderstanding and violence. When Europeans accepted Gilbertese customs and values there was seldom any difficulty. For example, when three boats from the *Belle* lost sight of their mother-ship while chasing whales in the early 1850s, they landed at Nonouti where they 'were very kindly and hospitably treated' until collected a week later.³⁶

But the Gilbertese did not easily give up their claim to wreck-salvage. As late as 1881 when the *Orwell* was wrecked at Beru, the local villagers destroyed or threw overboard anything they considered to be useless, helped themselves to quantities of liquor and tobacco, and insisted that it was custom. Under threat of bombardment from HMS *Espiègle* they agreed to pay a fine of thirty tons of copra but afterwards bitterly protested the injustice of its imposition.³⁷

These incidents were all recorded in the press of the time but often in an embellished and sensationalised form. The indiscriminate firing at canoes by the *Alabama*, for example, is recorded in logs, not in newspapers. And, in a sample of more than 500 whaling contacts in the Gilberts, there was, in addition to those cases already discussed, only one other misdemeanour considered worthy of mention: at Arorae, in 1850, a man who stole cutlery and clothing was detected and escaped overboard (leaving a handful of hair behind) under a barrage of coconuts thrown by the wrathful crew while his fellow-Islanders watched warily in case they were to be held collectively responsible for his actions.³⁸

When the overall levels of contact are considered there were, in reality, very few cases of theft, deception or violence, partly because basic conventions of behaviour for both parties were well established in the early years of trade:

they are perfectly harmless while on board the ship as they carry no weapons, — and everything on board is carefully put on [one] side.³⁹

The Islanders had clearly concluded that a continuing trade was more rewarding than a feast of riches followed by famine, and any individual who jeopardised trade was likely to receive greater punishment at their hands than from his victims. At Ocean Island the Banabans were inclined to put a tabu on trade but this usually took the

form of a refusal to conduct any transactions at all unless appropriate gifts were made to a leading chief, although on at least one occasion they sold firewood at seven pounds of tobacco per load but then refused to allow the boats to collect the wood.⁴⁰

Between 1820 and 1870 perhaps a thousand whaling ships touched at the islands of the Gilbert and Ellice groups and at Ocean Island. The manners and customs of shipboard life and the apparent values exhibited by Europeans on ship or on shore were hardly representative of life in European countries but technological achievements, and basic attitudes towards private property and commerce, were quickly recognised by Islanders. Trade became an accepted part of life and, because most of the commodities offered for sale were either of traditional manufacture or, like fish and coconuts, required no processing at all, there was a decline in the quantities of food and other goods available for ceremonial purposes or for storage against drought. Pigs and poultry became competitors for food resources and their presence affected village hygiene and, eventually, village diet. Iron tools, utensils and fish hooks made traditional occupations less demanding and allowed more time for the manufacture of articles for trade. Tobacco, the new god, assumed sufficient status for it to be offered to the old at village shrines while ancestors were able to savour its aroma by having smoke puffed into their preserved skulls. All islands of both groups were affected in some measure by these developments but their impact was greatest in the southern Gilberts where the whaling era saw a frequency of shipping and a degree of contact with foreigners that has not been matched since.

Although the northern Gilberts were off the regular whaling routes from Honolulu they were, from the 1850s, drawn increasingly within the economic orbit of Sydney. Before this time trade had generally been incidental to whaling. Apart from provisions, whalers bought handicrafts, turtle shell and, from the 1840s, coconut oil. This latter commodity had been marketed in Sydney as early as 1818 but it was not until coconut oil became a basic ingredient in soap and candles that the trade assumed any significance.⁴¹ Lacking the appropriate resources, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands had been by-passed by the lucrative though speculative trade in sandalwood and pearl shell but the newly created market for coconut products was to provide them with their only trading staple. Oil was just one of the many products traditionally made from the coconut palm. After opening the ripe nuts and exposing the white flesh to the sun the oil could then be pressed out, or allowed to drip into containers. The oil had its uses in cooking and, apparently a post-European innovation, in lamps, but its main use was cosmetic; smeared on the body it formed a protective covering against the cold and the damp. During life-crisis rituals and on other important occasions—the consummation of a *tinaba* relationship, for example, or a public dancing debut—the participants were anointed with coconut oil. Thus the trade demanded no new skill but, rather,

the expansion of an existing one. The trade was concentrated in the northern and central islands where the rainfall was higher than in the south, the population density lower, there was little competition from the provision trade and there were chiefs prepared to enter into mutually beneficial relationships with the traders.

The first purchases of coconut oil in the Gilbert Islands were made by whalers but the real pioneers of the trade were Richard Randell and George Durant who landed on Butaritari in 1846. In notable contrast with his later public-spirited attitudes, Randell traded arms, ammunition, liquor and tobacco for oil, surrounded himself with no less than four scantily clad wives and intervened in island politics in his attempts to secure a cargo. Yet he quickly developed a great empathy with the Gilbertese, learned to speak their language, and earned their respect as an honest, if shrewd, trader. For some years Randell on Butaritari and Durant on Makin had a monopoly of trade in the area. But their business was small, they lacked capital and, because they had no ships of their own, they had to share their profits with those who carried or bought their oil—a decided disadvantage at a time when a few of the whalers were beginning to regard coconut oil as rather more than a side-line. For example the *Herald*, a Fairhaven whaler, made her way through the Gilberts whaling and trading for coconut oil at Tamana, Kuria and Abemama and also at Ebon in the Marshalls between July 1850 and February 1851.⁴² The total purchases of oil, some 3200 gallons in the Gilberts and 2700 in the Marshalls, represented a good return for the time spent but were modest compared with the profits being made by Captain Ichabod Handy, master of the *Belle* (another Fairhaven whaler), and premier among the whaler-traders of the central Pacific.

Handy became involved in the coconut oil trade in 1849 when he found Kabunare, a chief of Abaiang, being held on Butaritari apparently at the behest of Randell who anticipated a coconut oil ransom. Handy returned Kabunare to Abaiang and in return was given land and the services of Kabunare and his brothers as trading agents.⁴³ After a brief spell of trading Handy sailed for Sydney with a cargo which included some 6000 gallons of coconut oil although some of this may have been shipped for Randell who travelled with him as a passenger. Randell remained in Sydney for several months during which time he formed a partnership with Charles Smith who soon had two schooners engaged in the trade one of which, the *Chieftain*, was at Abemama in competition with the *Herald* and the *Belle* by February 1851.⁴⁴

Handy, obviously convinced of the profitability of the trade by his experience at Abaiang, had returned ahead of Randell and had secured at least 16 000 gallons of oil before the *Chieftain* reached Abemama. By June, Handy was back in Sydney where he unloaded 29 000 gallons of coconut oil and a mere 7000 gallons of sperm oil—a cargo with a gross value of nearly £8000 and a profit on the coconut oil alone in excess of £4000. For Handy, the major shareholder in the *Belle*, whaling had become a side-line.⁴⁵ From Sydney Handy

returned direct to the Gilberts. Four months and several whales later, and with 10 000 gallons of coconut oil, Handy sailed for the United States. He reached New Bedford in September 1852 after a voyage, long even by whaling standards, of nearly eight years.⁴⁶

In January 1853 he sailed again for the Gilberts, touching first at Arorae, where he recruited two crewmen. The oil trade was still heavily concentrated at Butaritari, Abemama and Abaiang, although Handy had obtained 2000 gallons at Beru on his earlier voyage. In response to increasing competition Handy had refined his trading procedures for maximum efficiency and profit. He used some agents, European and Gilbertese, but looked after most of the buying himself remaining on shore for several days, even several weeks on occasions, buying oil in small lots and having it coopered on the beach. Meanwhile Pillsburg, who had sailed as Handy's mate since 1838, took the *Belle* to sea in pursuit of whales or, occasionally, supervised maintenance and painting while the ship was at anchor. Thus the *Belle* remained for only a day or two at each island while the oil was rafted to the ship and she spent nearly as much time at sea as many full-time whalers. Between 1853 and 1855 Handy acquired some 30 000 gallons of coconut oil and about half that quantity of whale oils as well as whale bone and other incidental items. The profits were good by contemporary standards but well below those of the halycon days of the early 1850s. On the last stage of his voyage in 1855—a run from Honolulu through the central Pacific to New Zealand and thence to the United States—he had bought only 3000 gallons of coconut oil.⁴⁷ On her next voyage, from 1857 to 1862, the *Belle*, under a new captain, was again a typical whaler, buying only provisions on her brief stops in the southern Gilberts while on her way from Honolulu to New Zealand.⁴⁸

Once Handy had withdrawn from the trade in 1855 no other whaler offered Randell any serious competition. The *Alfred Gibbs* traded for coconut oil at Tabiteuea in 1853 and 1856, the *Elizabeth Swift* at Onotoa in 1862, and other vessels were similarly involved but the quantities purchased—for example 500 gallons by the *Elizabeth Swift* and a mere 100 gallons by the *Alfred Gibbs* in 1853—were small and insignificant in terms of overall production.⁴⁹ Richard Randell and his partners had expanded their business. With resident trading agents on the islands and efficient shipping in the group and to Sydney they had effectively squeezed the whalers out of the trade. By 1852 Randell had a flourishing establishment at Butaritari and oil agents on Abaiang, Tarawa, Maiana and Tabiteuea. Butaritari-Makin, which produced some 40 000 gallons of oil in a good year, remained his best station, but over the next twenty years he bought oil either directly or through agents on all islands of the group. With the backing of Charles Smith, the services of Hugh Fairclough as shipping manager, and his own business skill and local knowledge, Randell was able to dominate the coconut oil trade of the Gilbert Islands for more than a decade.⁵⁰

It was, however, a domination that was challenged often and only

maintained by constant vigilance. The most serious opposition came from Robert Towns, a Sydney entrepreneur with widespread commercial interests in the Pacific Islands. Towns' first attempt to secure a portion of the trade, a whaling-trading voyage in 1852, was a disaster; the *Genii* was in the Gilberts in the whaling off-season and, to add to the discomfort of her inept master who deserted at Kusaie, she was unable to acquire any coconut oil. Subsequent ventures employing a variety of captains and oil agents in both the Gilbert and Ellice groups, fared little better. A final attempt in partnership with Captain Michael Eury in the late 1860s was a modest success but came at a time when Randell's business was in decline.⁵¹ Other hopefuls also entered the trade: the *Rodolph*, for example, after a profitless voyage to buy island produce to feed the 'forty-niners' in California, was sent to the Gilberts in 1851 only to be wrecked off south Tabiteuea during her first voyage;⁵² in the late 1850s the Honolulu firm of Stapenhorst and Hoffschlaeger established a base at Ebon in the Marshalls and regularly sent the *Pfeil* to the northern Gilberts for coconut oil;⁵³ J.C. Malcolm, a Sydney merchant, had a resident agent on Maiana and at least one ship in the Gilberts run by 1860.⁵⁴

The trade also attracted its share of scoundrels. In the late 1860s and early 1870s Benjamin Pease and the notorious Bully Hayes bought oil where they could and sometimes raided the stores of other traders where they could not. Hayes also employed oil agents in the Gilberts, some of whom (James Garstang on Tabiteuea for example) were as unscrupulous as he.⁵⁵ Randell, Eury and Towns all suffered at his hands and so did Captain John Daly of the *Lady Alicia* who complained that Hayes had taken oil and trade worth £421 from his agents at Tarawa, Abaiang and Marakei. Although regarded as courteous and helpful by the missionary Bingham, Daly was, in fact, little better than Hayes. He had few scruples, commercial or otherwise, and took little interest in the welfare of his traders one of whom, far from being robbed by Hayes, confessed to Commander Dupois of HMS *Rosario* that he was

dissatisfied and much in dread of the natives [of Abaiang] and on Hayes coming there at the beginning of 1873 he begged him to take him off the island and offered to sell him the trade he had collected.⁵⁶

In the 1870s coconut oil gave way to copra; the dried coconut flesh was more convenient to handle and machinery could more efficiently extract its oil. The beginnings of the copra trade were marked by the expansion of large commercial companies in the Pacific Islands, the development of plantations in some areas, and the gradual elimination of the smaller firms, the owner-operated trading vessels and the independent traders. Foremost in this expansion was the Hamburg firm of J.C. Godeffroy und Sohn which, with encouragement and assistance from German imperial authorities, spread its tentacles throughout the western Pacific in the latter half of the 19th

century. By 1874 the firm was trading in the Gilbert and Ellice groups and by the end of the decade had resident agents on most islands with their main competition, until Californian and Sydney firms entered the area in the 1880s, coming from the Auckland firm of Henderson and Macfarlane. There was no opposition from Randell who had sold his business interests and left the Gilberts to settle in Sydney in 1873.⁵⁷ Only the more able and better educated of his agents, like Robert Corrie of Maiana and Robert Randolph of Abaiang, survived the transition as independent traders; the others either left the group, drifted into a beachcombing existence, or were employed by the large firms which kept them so heavily in debt that they were forced to remain in the islands.

The copra trade was heir to the coconut oil trade in the northern and central Gilberts, and to the provision trade and prostitution in the south; for the Ellice Islanders it represented their first sustained commercial contact with the outside world. While all Islanders participated in some degree in the technological revolution made possible by commerce, the main beneficiaries were the paramount chiefs of the northern and central Gilberts. Having used foreign influence to help consolidate their positions, they were then free to indulge their whims and fancies. The high chief of Abaiang imported a timber house from the United States for his 'palace', and his counterpart at Butaritari had a 'one horse carriage' and, later, a horse to pull it, but neither could compete with Tem Binoka's craving for the trinkets and trappings of western civilisation.⁵⁸ For him, possession was more important than utility. In 1884 Lieutenant-Commander Moore of HMS *Dart* reported that:

His house contains a variety of articles which cannot be much use to him, such as sewing-machines, a musical-box, writing-desk, clocks, bedsteads, sofas, lamps, &c. A peacock disports itself on the rafters...⁵⁹

Binoka could afford to indulge himself. His position was secure even though his family had been dominant on Abemama for no more than three generations and it had not been until the regime of Tem Baiteke, Binoka's father, in the early years of European contact, that the family's paramountcy had been firmly established. After the 1851 massacre of Europeans and subsequent campaigns on Aranuka and Kuria which had reduced the populations on those islands, Baiteke and Binoka controlled all contacts with Europeans. Individuals were permitted to trade handicrafts and provisions with visiting vessels but coconut oil (and later copra) remained a royal monopoly. The loyalty of the chiefly élite was secured with judicious land grants and a generous share in their produce; firearms were allowed only to trusted retainers and by the 1870s, when Baiteke abdicated in Binoka's favour, the *Uea*, or high chief, was an absolute monarch to his 3000 subjects.⁶⁰ And yet it was not power won and held solely by force of arms. The arms helped, but in traditional lore the rise of the dynasty is

attributed partly, if not largely, to sorcery (confirmed in its effectiveness by military success), and Binoka is remembered more as one to be feared for his malevolent spiritual powers than for his sharpshooting with a Winchester Repeater.

No other chiefly line enjoyed such despotic power. Butaritari and Makin acknowledged a paramount chief but only at some risk could he ignore the advice or act without the consent of other leading chiefs. The only other island with claims to a paramount chiefship was Abaiang where, in the 1850s, Kaiea I succeeded in welding the three traditional governmental districts into a single polity. His reward was the acquisition of the island's tobacco agency, a levy of £15 a tun on coconut oil exports, and the backing of Bingham and his fellow missionaries for his attempts to secure a dynastic kingship. But the power of Kaiea and his successors was always tenuous and often in dispute; their reign was marked by a series of bloody battles between rival factions on Abaiang and on the neighbouring island of Tarawa. At times the power of Kaiea II sank so low that to the despairing Reverend Horace Taylor it seemed that he was king 'only in name, & that not always.'⁶¹

The Ellice Islands, much smaller and less populous than the Gilberts, were by-passed by many of these developments. Tobacco became a trade item but at no stage did it assume the dominant role that characterised commerce in the Gilberts. Nor was there any significant trade in firearms. Violence was much less a feature of Ellice Islands society; the political situation was relatively stable on most islands with clearly defined and accepted procedures for the replacement of unsatisfactory chiefs. Their contacts with whalers were infrequent but by the 1860s J.C. Malcolm of Sydney was active in the group and Tom de Wolf of Liverpool employed resident traders—among them Louis Becke—on several islands.⁶² In one notable episode, some of the people of Vaitupu were persuaded by J.C. Williams (son of the pioneering missionary) to form a company for the purpose of conducting trade on their island, buying a vessel, and for exploiting Niulakita—hitherto uninhabited—as a plantation. The experiment cost them more than £2000.⁶³

For the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders commerce provided a means of expanding the very limited technology permitted by their environment. Thus they were eager participants in trade from the earliest days of contact; some traditional values and modes of behaviour were modified in order to benefit from the opportunities available. The use of *nikiranroro* and slaves as prostitutes is but one example; in the southern Gilberts the great drought of the 1870s was almost certainly more devastating in its impact because for three decades the people had become accustomed to selling their surplus rather than storing it against such contingencies. The cultural modifications were deliberately selective, however, and the range of

introduced goods relatively small. Shell had given way to steel, and the consumption of tobacco had become a national habit, but dress, except for high chiefs with a taste for frock coats and military uniforms, remained much the same as before—so much so that when the Reverend James Vivian called at Arorae in 1871 he found that ‘their costume was [so] primitive [*sic*] that the ladies had to make their escape below and remain there all the time of our stay.’⁶⁴

Trade was an early and continuing feature of contact with Europeans; it also served to bring the islands to the attention of the outside world. Inevitably, the attention of missionaries, labour recruiters and imperial authorities was attracted. Each, in turn, would initiate changes no less profound in their impact than those which began with the simple barter of trifles and trinkets for handicrafts and provisions. Before the end of the 19th century every Gilbertese and Ellice Islands household was selling its surplus goods in a westernised market.

CHAPTER THREE

New gods, new laws: the arrival of Christian missions

Because of their remoteness and the absence of any significant European presence, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were ignored by Christian missions until the latter half of the 19th century. Then, because of the large number of islands involved, the smallness of their populations and a scarcity of European missionaries prepared to reside in an environment that seemed harsh and inhospitable, the missions relied heavily upon Pacific Islanders as teachers and pastors. From 1857, when Hiram Bingham of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived in the Gilberts, until 1888 when the Sacred Heart Mission entered the field, the islands remained a Protestant preserve. The American Board, using Hawaiian missionaries supervised by a small number of Europeans, gradually extended its efforts to all islands as far south as Tabiteuea, but it became the victim of its own inadequacies and the indifference of a people still strongly wedded to traditional ways, and made little impact upon Gilbertese society. In the southern Gilberts and in the Ellice Islands the London Missionary Society made rapid progress. There, Polynesian pastors led a vigorous assault against 'the forces of darkness' and propounded a Samoanised form of Christianity that had a greater appeal for Islanders than the doctrines and lifestyle advocated by most European missionaries. Towards the end of the century both missions were faced with a rapidly expanding Roman Catholic presence. In the south, the LMS generally had sufficient strength to withstand the challenge but in the north the American Board steadily lost the little ground it had gained before finally withdrawing from the Gilberts in 1917.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was formed in 1810 in Massachusetts and sent its first mission to Hawaii in 1819. Then, in co-operation with the Hawaiian Evangelical Association, it extended its activities to Micronesia and in 1852 the vanguard of three missionary families called at Butaritari on their way to the Marshall Islands. With Richard Randell as interpreter, they explained their work to Na Kaiea, the paramount chief, and presented him with bibles, books, a large red blanket and a letter of introduction from Kamehameha IV of Hawaii. The youthful potentate (Kaiea was about fourteen at the time) showed a polite interest in their work but then asked if Christianity would interfere with their custom of polygamy. The missionaries were at first evasive and were then dissuaded from any more emphatic statement by the unease of

Randell—then a polygamist with four wives.¹ On the basis of even this brief visit the missionaries saw the Gilberts as a promising field of endeavour:

At the Kings Mill group is an important field. Fifty thousand, in the most deplorable condition, appear to be in a state of readiness for the Gospel. They are tired of their old religion; they are falling before their vices—they are interested in what has been done for other islands, and now wait in this anxious state for something new.²

Three years later Dr and Mrs George Pierson travelled to Ponape via the Gilberts on the *Belle* with Captain Handy. As a future site for a mission station, Butaritari was rejected because of its remoteness from other centres of population, Abemama because of the discouraging comments of Tem Baiteke's emissary:

[the missionaries] would teach the people, and then they would become all like the king and he would lose his power. They said they knew all about it, "missionaries all gammon".³

Abaiang, because it was located close to other populous islands, and because of Handy's influence with the most powerful chief, was the island finally chosen. Expansion became possible in 1856 when the Board acquired a new vessel to service its remote stations. It was a brigantine, purchased with the nickel and dime contributions of thousands of American Sunday School children and, as a reflection of the millennialist hopes and leanings of its sponsors, was named the *Morning Star*.⁴ On its first voyage it carried the Reverend Hiram Bingham Jr, J.W. Kanoa (Bingham's Hawaiian assistant) and their wives to Abaiang.

Hiram Bingham was born in 1831, the son of a pioneering missionary to Hawaii. The older Bingham had been rejected by his colleagues in 1840 and the family had returned to the United States where Hiram Jr completed his schooling, attended Yale and then, after a brief spell of teaching, studied at Andover Seminary in preparation for a missionary career. The American Board, mindful of the temptations of island life, insisted on married missionaries and, like his father before him, Bingham married and sailed for his chosen mission field within a month of his ordination.⁵ Physically, Bingham was not strong. He suffered from frequent bowel ailments, and from chronic throat trouble which affected his ability to speak in public; his eyesight was so weak that he could only spend two or three hours a day reading. Even as he took up his appointment one of his colleagues questioned its wisdom and argued that the 'most favourable position that could be found will be sufficiently trying to his health.'⁶ Bingham could not escape from this physical weakness which time after time forced him to leave the 'perishing benighted heathen' to whose salvation he had committed himself. Yet he remained constant to his chosen path and never succumbed to despair, although he came close

at times, and in the face of continuing disappointments he showed patience and forbearance.

Bingham was only 26 years old when he arrived in the Gilberts and, in his youthful ardour, he relished the task ahead:

The sight of naked men, boys, girls and more than half naked women, the observance of their extreme poverty, their worship of false gods, their extremely immodest manners and customs, their great licentiousness, their unbounded lying, their covetousness, theft, warlike spirit and bloody warfare, a realizing sense of their ignorance of a final judgement of heaven of hell of Jesus Christ, have made me long to preach to them...⁷

First, however, Bingham had to learn to speak Gilbertese. In doing so, he gave the language its written form but, as he found, this was no easy task:

...no miraculous gift of tongues is now conferred upon the ambassadors of Christ. Like other missionaries I have found no other way for the obtaining of my desire than to patiently set myself to work in picking up one word after another and one sentence after another of the heathen jargon which noisy savages were shouting about my ears.⁸

After he had collected some 2000 words in this way Bingham paid one of his young converts a dollar for each additional hundred words he could add to the list.⁹ By 1865, when ill-health forced him to leave the Gilberts, two of the gospels, Matthew and John, had been translated and printed in small editions. In Hawaii and in America Bingham continued with his translations and when he returned to the Gilberts in 1873 he took the completed New Testament with him. Two years later he was again forced to leave and thereafter he was only able to live in the Gilberts for brief and infrequent periods. Despite illness and weak eyesight he persevered and by 1890 had completed the translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. Although he had received some help from his wife and from a succession of Gilbertese assistants, most notably Moses Kaure, the production of a written Gilbertese language and the translation of the Bible were essentially the products of one man's labours.¹⁰ Bingham's work sowed the seeds of literacy and Christianity, but his harvest was small—as an agency for converting Gilbertese Pagans into Christians, the American Board was a failure.

When the *Morning Star* arrived at Abaiang on 17 November 1857 it was an aging chief, Ten Temaua, who invited Bingham to establish a mission station at Koinawa, his own village. He gave the missionaries 'the choice of three sites, one in the village, one in its suburbs and the third a quarter of a mile still further distant'. Significantly, but not surprisingly, Bingham chose the site furthest from the village.¹¹ Even at this time the young Kaiea was a chief of importance and he was certainly recognised as paramount, Abaiang's first 'king', after the death of Ten Temaua in battle early in 1858. Kaiea showed an interest

in the work of the mission but initially he was more concerned with the usefulness and novelty value of the missionaries than with their spiritual message. Bingham loaned Kaiea a spyglass that he might assess the strength of invading armies from Tarawa, dressed his battle wounds, and tolerated the constant flow of Kaiea's conducted tours which featured the Bingham's alarm clock, a compass (which could be distorted with a magnetised knife blade) and 'the white woman', Mrs Bingham, as the prize exhibit.¹² These early contacts were important because they led Bingham to identify with Kaiea and thus the fortunes of the mission on Abaiang became firmly linked with those of the Kaiea dynasty.

After Bingham began to preach at Koinawa in June 1858, Kaiea was a regular churchgoer, although he and others who attended could seldom meet the missionaries' expectations of behaviour:

His idea of decorum at first was small, he frequently entering the chapel whistling, sometimes not removing his hat, even after being seated. The people generally are very slow to learn propriety in the house of God. Many of them, caring little if anything for the truth, habitually sprawl themselves out to sleep; not a few often laugh, talk, move about.¹³

Kaiea's interest, although important to Bingham, remained at a personal level; he was unable or unwilling to promote the Christian cause among his people. When he built his chapel in 1859, Bingham was only able to find one man who would help him without wages and for the most part he had to supervise his own paid labourers.¹⁴ Nor was Kaiea's power sufficient to protect the missionaries and their property. They were subjected to constant pilfering and harassment and even found it necessary to leave a servant to guard their houses while they attended Sunday service. On one occasion their kettle was stolen by means of a long hook lowered down the chimney—an incident that finally brought some relief when the two resident traders, Randolph and Robbin, banned all trade pending its return and threatened similar action in the event of any future molestation.¹⁵

Resistance to the missionaries and their teaching in these early years took the form of indifference rather than overt hostility; there was little enthusiasm for church attendance and less for schools. After two years at Abaiang, Bingham lamented that 'the desire for *reading* among the people is very small' and his wife found that she could only maintain her small class with the promise of a calico garment to those who attended for a term or could read the prescribed two pages within that time. By 1861 the congregations were 'very small', usually less than twenty, and the school was 'almost extinct'. The first two converts, baptised on 31 March 1861, had rejoined the ranks of the heathen within a year. Kaiea had seemed to offer some hope when he attended church regularly, gave up smoking (for a time), put aside three of his four wives, and learned to recite the alphabet, but by 1862 his progress, too, was 'steadily *backwards*'.¹⁶ Part of the explanation

for this state of affairs lay in the mission's attitude to education. Bingham reported: 'The king would send a son of his [to school] if we would agree to teach him English. Others are also very anxious to learn our language.' To the Gilbertese the utility of the foreign language was obvious but, in accordance with its long established principles, the mission would teach its adherents only in their own dialect.¹⁷

The missionaries were not solely to blame for the lack of enthusiasm for their cause. There had been a decade or so of regular contact with foreign traders but most of the transactions had been conducted by the chiefly élite. The average Islander had not been greatly affected, beyond an increase in the production of coconut oil, the acquisition of a few tools and a taste for tobacco. And the position of Kaiea, while boosted by foreign contact, was by no means secure. He could not ignore the cross-currents of district and chiefly rivalries on Abaiang and Tarawa, nor could he afford to offend any of the factions on whose support he depended. There was insufficient knowledge of European ways for the European god to be a popular rallying standard, and no other mission which might have had the effect of making opposing creeds attractive to rival chiefs or districts. Moreover, political instability, which was endemic to these islands, was heightened in the 1850s and 1860s by a rapid increase in the consumption of sour toddy. To Bingham, this was yet another hindrance to 'the work':

The sight of canoes speeding with great tubs of this abominable drink over our beautiful lagoon from one village to another was a saddening one. These would be taken into the council-house when the inhabitants of the village would indulge in a general debauch.¹⁸

After Bingham left Abaiang in 1864 the church went into rapid decline. Kaiea was one of the many who 'wandered' for a time but he returned to the fold in 1867.¹⁹ Then in 1869 a further outbreak of war saw the attempted murder of Mahoe, the Hawaiian missionary on Abaiang, and the destruction of the mission station. The outbreak was not so much a rebellion against Kaiea as a resurgence of traditional district and personal rivalries. The mission, being associated with Kaiea, suffered with him. Only Kaiea, his wife, his daughter and three others 'stood fast'—and all were forced into exile on Tarawa. On Abaiang, the only signs left of the mission station and twelve years of effort were 'three cocoa[nut] posts, some blocks of coral and a few scattered shells'.²⁰

Despite a discouraging lack of progress, the American Board gradually expanded its activities. Hawaiian missionaries were posted to Tarawa, Butaritari and Tabiteuea in the 1860s and to most of the other northern and central islands over the following decade, but there were few converts and even fewer who could meet the standards set for church membership. At Abemama, Baiteke and Binoka resisted the blandishments of the missionaries until 1873 when a Gilbertese teacher

was allowed to land; the school was popular, with Binoka as a star pupil and writing a royal monopoly but, faced with the fluctuating enthusiasm of the high chief, the mission made little real progress.²¹ By 1873 there were Hawaiian missionaries on seven islands, yet to this time the mission had admitted no more than 112 members of whom only 78 were still in 'good standing'.²² When Bingham returned in 1873, therefore, he was virtually starting afresh. To make matters worse, Abaiang was engaged in yet another war with Tarawa and the island was engulfed in a wave of drunkenness. Intervention by the USS *Jamestown* and the USS *Narragansett* helped to bring about an uneasy peace but the church was still opposed by some and ignored by most. Nonetheless, Bingham managed to get his school re-established and in 1874 he was joined by the Reverend Horace Taylor. Any optimism was dashed when Bingham was again forced to leave and Taylor was left to lead a solitary and tragic life; after the death of his wife he married her sister but she, too, died soon after her arrival at Abaiang. Because of the isolation and living conditions imposed on European missionaries, the house and school were dismantled in 1882 and moved to Kusaie (now Kosrae). Henceforth the mission was staffed by Hawaiians under occasional and peripatetic supervision from European missionaries based in the Marshalls.²³ The most influential of these was Alfred Walkup who had the major responsibility for the Gilbert Islands mission in the 1880s and 1890s. Walkup, a former professional boxer, was a man of enormous drive and an energetic evangelist but with a training school in Kusaie to run, and a ship under his control, he could spare little time for the work in the Gilberts.

In the late 1870s and through the 1880s some of the Hawaiian missionaries began to report a more favourable response to their efforts, although the advice of naval commanders was probably as important in the reform of island governments as were the wishes of the missionaries. Abaiang, the scene of many earlier disappointments, now boasted five schools, 290 church members and congregations of nearly 400 (out of a population of 2500); Kaiea II imposed a ban on the production and consumption of sour toddy and began to introduce laws favoured by the mission.²⁴ At Marakei, Kanoho, the resident Hawaiian pastor, first helped Ten Tatum to establish a nominal paramountcy in 1886. Two years later Kanoho reported that the people had been making 'laws for their better government, and for the suppression of evil practices' although the attempt cannot have been overly successful because in 1889 Walkup was asked to help establish a new government on the island. On his advice firearms were collected, policemen appointed and laws promulgated.²⁵ Further north, at Butaritari, the mission had fluctuating fortunes. There was an early set-back in 1866 when the high chief killed three Hawaiian seamen from the *Pfeil* and the missionaries, fearing for their lives, withdrew for a year.²⁶ In 1889 Robert Louis Stevenson attended services in the 'cathedral' and found that after more than twenty years of missionary endeavour, the congregation seldom exceeded thirty. While Stevenson

admired Maka for his good humour and dedication, he thought the missionary was engaged in a futile exercise, 'flogging a dead horse and blowing a cold fire', a view that was perhaps coloured by the orgy of drunkenness that occurred while he was visiting the island. Before Stevenson left, however, the 'king and queen' had sworn off alcohol and joined the church. Within a year Maka had a religious revival on his hands; it 'commenced with the king and his house, then the village, and reached all along the island' and thence to Makin.²⁷

Such revivals were rare, however, and few of the Hawaiian missionaries could match the achievements of Walkup on his occasional visits. In response to the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries, Walkup spent four months on Nonouti in 1889. He found the people were 'without clothing, except for a few who wore dirty old rags worse than their native costumes'. Worse, according to his lights, he found men, women and children addicted to tobacco. They 'smoked so voraciously that they swallowed the smoke' which made them 'drop over twitching and quivering and foaming at the mouth'. Walkup rallied his forces and raised the church contribution to a high-point of 25 000 coconuts a month, and one trader sold more cloth in a week than he had done in several years.²⁸ After Walkup's departure, however, the Hawaiians steadily lost ground in the face of aggressive proselytising by Roman Catholic priests who not only permitted the use of tobacco but distributed it freely among their converts.

For many years Tabiteuea seemed to promise the best chance of success for the mission. There, a few months after the arrival of the first Hawaiian missionaries in 1868, a visiting delegate reported that many sacred objects had been destroyed and that the people had given up alcohol and dancing and had 'outwardly forsaken their ancient worship'.²⁹ A year later there were nearly 2000 pupils in mission schools and a programme of church and school building was under way.³⁰ The men primarily responsible for this spectacular progress were Kapu, described by Taylor as 'a noble man, modest and unassuming',³¹ and his colleague, Nalimu. After this initial enthusiasm there was a temporary decline but by 1880 Kapu was comparing the spread of religious interest to an epidemic and the Reverend Edward Doane found congregations of a thousand or more and did not doubt Kapu's assertion that the Holy Spirit was working in their midst. He noted with approval that in reported 'fighting over some heathenish rites... the "right" won the day'.³² Doane was not the first American Board missionary to give tacit or explicit approval to warfare in the 'right' cause but he did not realise that Kapu, impatient for success, had adopted a policy of conversion by the sword.

Kapu's initial success was at Eita village in northern Tabiteuea where, by persistence, force of personality, and a successful confrontation with the traditional gods, he had emerged as effective ruler by the late 1870s.³³ On being rebuffed by the other northern

villages Kapu embarked on a series of campaigns which, in a little more than a year, saw all of northern Tabiteuea united under the control of 'Kapu the law-giver'. Kapu's laws concerning church attendance, Sabbath observance and road building were enforced, sour toddy and imported spirits were banned and, in accordance with Christian principles, all weapons of war including seventy-nine muskets and 'piles' of spears and wooden swords were destroyed in a huge bonfire.³⁴ This achieved, Kapu turned his attention to the southern districts of the atoll. Here, the Islanders had been consistently indifferent towards Christianity although not towards all religious innovation; Tioba (Jehovah), symbolised by feather-covered crosses and worshipped under the leadership of a prophet who had observed Roman Catholicism in Tahiti, had an enthusiastic following at the village of Tewai. Rejected again, Kapu led his hymn-singing army on a crusade to promote the cause of 'The Book'. It was a measure of his influence that he was able to introduce the concept of a massed army to an island where combat was traditionally between individuals; that he was able to pit relatives one against the other; and where land was usually given in compensation for death, it was now seized by the victors.

When the final battle took place near Tewai village on 15 September 1880, the southerners placed their faith in an old cannon. As it could be fired only once before a rainstorm soaked their gunpowder, it was a doubtful asset. So confident were they, however, that they clustered around their cannon and became easy victims to Kapu's encircling army. Many of the dead were decapitated, their bodies burned on a huge pyre fed with thatch and timber from nearby houses; only those able to hide in the bush or who reached the sanctuary of a solitary Christian household, were spared.

Two days later the *Morning Star* arrived and the island's three traders went on board 'telling all manner of lies about the Hawaiian missionaries'. The charges were briefly investigated but dismissed; the incident, as reported by Kapu and Nalimu and confirmed by a public meeting in the north, was occasioned by toddy-drinking southerners who refused the northerners access to lands they held in the south.³⁵ It was, Walkup reported, 'Glorious to know this people had destroyed their instruments of war... and are now listening to the gospel of the Lord'.³⁶ Rumours spread, however, and a year later the mission conducted another investigation and came to the conclusion that Nalimu was the chief instigator, although Kapu was also implicated, and both had shared in the spoils. The Hawaiians conceded that at least 373 deaths had occurred although one member of the investigating committee believed that the number of deaths was in excess of 600.³⁷ The American Board repudiated this 'deed of darkness' and removed Nalimu. Kapu, who had been absolved for any major responsibility by well-coached Gilbertese witnesses, and by his own plausibility compared with the hesitancy and apparent guilt of Nalimu, was allowed to remain on Tabiteuea where he continued to

make laws and was feared for his apparent ability to communicate with the spirit of his dead wife.³⁸ Even after resigning from the mission in 1887 Kapu remained a strong voice in the Protestant-dominated councils of the north. In 1892 Captain E.H.M. Davis of HMS *Royalist* found him fomenting trouble against the small Roman Catholic community on the island and, learning of his past, deported him.³⁹

By the 1890s the mission of the American Board, never strong, was in decline; the experimental governments of the 1880s existed in name only, the Butaritari revival was shortlived. Many of the Hawaiian teachers were old and feeble, others went on furlough and were not replaced. The mission itself acknowledged that the presence of Protestantism in the northern and central islands was represented by 'half-a-dozen Hawaiian ministers of limited education; none of them men of special leadership.'⁴⁰ Lacking in resources, for the most part unsupervised, and sapped of vigour by decades of disappointment, some of the missionaries gave up in despair or turned to more worldly pursuits. At Butaritari, for example, Kanoa gave up his school because of poor attendance and subsequently ridiculed any potential pupils before resigning from the mission in 1887.⁴¹ When the Hawaiian Board tried to prevent its missionaries from trading, Kapu on Tabiteuea and Haina on Tarawa brought their relatives from Hawaii to look after the commercial side of their affairs. Others like Kanoho on Marakei simply went into trading on their own account. On Butaritari, Maka made cash loans to the members of his flock, held their land as security, and made annually at least ten tons of copra from the nuts he collected as interest.⁴² Walkup, though disappointed and sometimes angered by the Hawaiian missionaries' actions, was not particularly surprised at their performance; most were men of little education and limited theological training, they were left in the Gilberts for too long without supervision or encouragement, and they were fighting a battle that seemed impossible to win.⁴³

There were other reasons for the mission's lack of success. Bingham himself was more of a scholar than an evangelist; he was less concerned with the creation of a secular polity that would enforce a generalised acceptance of Christianity than with the saving of individual souls. Bingham, Taylor and, with a few exceptions, the Hawaiian pastors were much less aggressive in their promotion of Christianity than their counterparts elsewhere in the Pacific. Walkup was an exception but by the time he arrived many of the pastors had already given up the struggle. The lifestyle urged by the mission had little attraction for the Gilbertese—'No song, no dance, no tobacco, no liquor, no alleviative of life—only toil and church-going' as Stevenson described it.⁴⁴ In particular, the prohibition on tobacco gave the mission little chance of success among a people addicted to its use and, after the death of Walkup in 1908, the Reverend Irving Channon, his successor, gradually relaxed the no-smoking rule.⁴⁵

To some extent, however, all these factors were peripheral to the

central issue; it is questionable whether the missionaries would have been any more successful with greater resources and a more liberal attitude towards dancing and the use of tobacco. A new ideology could not be accepted in isolation; it would not be until the Gilbertese had begun to question their own beliefs or perceived some utility in the Christian ethic that they could begin to make the ideology their own. It would need to make sense in their terms, which might not be those of the missionaries, before it could be adapted to Gilbertese needs and values and find a place in their society. In the 1870s and 1880s the people of the northern and central Gilberts were more concerned with traditional political rivalries which had been intensified and given new direction by foreign contact. Christianity, as presented and perceived, was not considered to be of great relevance to these fundamental issues. Thus it was not until later, when the labour trade and naval law had made their impact, and colonial rule had brought peace and a new political order, that the people of the islands occupied by the American Board began to make significant modifications to their framework of cultural values. Literacy and Christianity were to be phenomena of the 20th century not the 19th; further south, where social organisation was different, populations smaller and more cohesive, the frequency of European contact much higher, and the missionaries more aggressive and direct in their methods, Christianity became more quickly absorbed into the fabric of island life.

The work of the American Board extended only as far south as Tabiteuea. In the southern Gilberts, and in the Ellice Islands, the London Missionary Society advanced the Protestant cause. After its first stumbling efforts in Tahiti in 1797 the LMS had gradually spread its network of European missionaries and Polynesian pastors and teachers throughout Polynesia and into Melanesia. In 1861 Elekana, an LMS teacher from Manihiki in the Cook Islands, drifted by canoe to Nukulaelae in the Ellice group. He remained on the island for several months and then went by trading vessel to Samoa where he pleaded for teachers for Nukulaelae. The LMS agreed to extend his activities to the Ellice Islands and the Reverend A.W. Murray took teachers, including Elekana, to Nukulaelae, Funafuti and Nui in 1865. Over the ensuing three decades LMS pastors, most of them from Samoa, transformed lifestyles in all the Ellice and the five southernmost Gilbert Islands.

The conversion experience in this new field was strongly influenced by earlier developments, both sacred and secular, in Samoa. There, the pioneer missionaries had found their way difficult but gradually, as the Samoans had come to understand, to adopt and, only then, to accept the Christian message, the mission made better progress. One factor in this acceptance, and also a result of it, was the gradual integration of the pastor into the village community. Initially the pastors were kept in a subordinate role; it was not until the 1850s and 1860s that increased powers and privileges were wrested from the

European missionaries. Because they were usually strangers in the villages in which they worked, the pastors were fed, housed and paid by their congregations; in time they acquired an influential role in village politics. The laws they suggested (and fines they collected) in the name of Christianity helped to replace sanctions which had been eroded by foreign influences; the revised government order bolstered the status of pastors as well as village councillors; and the church, in turn, made deacons of village rulers. By this time, too, a Samoanised version of Christian belief and behaviour had been grafted on to traditional structures to produce a modified *Fa'a Samoa*—a new Samoan Way.⁴⁶

Thus the new mission to the Ellice Islands came at a time when the self-confidence of the LMS pastors was at its peak. As they came from the traditional homeland, as their god was represented as being an ancestral deity of greater antiquity and power than those traditionally worshipped, the New Samoan Way was soon absorbed into the Ellice lifestyle. Mission stations were established throughout the group by the early 1870s and on Beru, Onotoa, Nikunau, Tamana and Arorae in the southern Gilberts by 1875.

As well as affinities of culture and language, other factors worked to the advantage of the LMS pastors. Most important, perhaps, was the receptiveness of the Ellice Islanders, many of whom had already begun to question traditional beliefs as a consequence of their contact with foreigners. When he visited the group in 1865 Murray found that on most of the central and southern Ellice Islands:

All had abandoned heathenism and were waiting for light to direct them as to whom they should worship and the kind of worship they should render. God had gone out before us and prepared our way in a manner which has few parallels in the history of missions.⁴⁷

Although subsequent developments clearly disprove Murray's assertion that customary beliefs had been universally discarded there was, nonetheless, a great interest in Christianity and, from the outset, an unusual willingness to accept the precepts and practices laid down by the missionaries. The explanations, too, are to be found in mortal rather than divine intervention. On both Niutao and Nui, for example, traders had earlier set themselves up as missionaries, imposed Sabbath observance, made laws, and collected fines and church contributions in coconut oil.⁴⁸ Their disregard for sacred objects, their undisguised contempt for indigenous beliefs, and their apparent immunity from the wrath of the gods when tabus had been violated, all served to undermine confidence in the traditional religion. It is also possible that Funafuti had come under the influence of Rotuman converts who had drifted to the island;⁴⁹ Nukulaelae and, to a lesser extent, Funafuti had already been subjected to Elekana's persuasions. Moreover, the status of converts had been raised by the apparent influence of Elekana with the European missionaries and the

relative wealth of the LMS pastors sent to the group. In 1863 the removal of about two-thirds of the people from Nukulaelae and Funafuti by labour recruiters from Peru had shaken all the Ellice communities and demoralised those directly affected. Here, as in the Gilberts a few years later, the teachers and the mission were seen as a possible source of protection from unscrupulous recruiting.⁵⁰ The most significant factor, however, was probably the Samoan experience and the evangelical zeal and political sophistication of those who brought Christianity to the Ellice Islands.

In the Gilbert Islands it took the teachers much longer to achieve a position of influence but once they had achieved the initial breakthrough their power was considerable. First, however, there were language difficulties to be overcome. Then, the missionaries were faced with the innate conservatism of the *maneaba* governments and the absence of any centralised authority which could be enlisted in their cause. It would also appear that the Samoan pastors were regarded as outsiders and not, as in the Ellice Islands, privileged kinsmen. It follows that the Gilbertese were less enamoured of the New Samoan Way. Moreover, by the time the mission was extended to the Gilberts in the 1870s, the Gilbertese were much more worldly-wise than the Ellice Islanders had been five years earlier. Not only had they experienced regular contact with whalers and other itinerants but labour recruiting for Fiji, Samoa and Tahiti had been established on a regular basis over the preceding decade. The Gilbertese were thus able to obtain many more of the perceived material benefits of western civilisation without paying the price demanded by the missionaries. It was also significant that the populations of most of the Gilbert Islands were larger and politically much less stable than those of the Ellice Islands. Except for the time taken to win a nominal acceptance for Christianity, however, the patterns of mission-inspired change were similar throughout the Ellice and southern Gilbert Islands.

The major preoccupations of the teachers in the early years were to teach literacy and Bible knowledge, to give their work a visible presence in the form of church buildings, and to secure community recognition of a basic code of Christian behaviour. Samoan was used as the language of church and school in the Ellice Islands and, in the southern Gilberts, Samoan texts were used as well as the Biblical works in Gilbertese prepared by Bingham and the American Board. School hours and standards depended on the enthusiasm and competence of the teacher but classes were generally held for an hour or two every day except Sunday. At first people of all ages attended school but once a basic level of literacy had been established the teachers concentrated their efforts on the children. Literacy spread quickly in the Ellice Islands in particular because of the closeness of the language to Samoan and the enthusiasm of the pupils. At Nukulaelae, for example, Murray found that eighteen months after he first left a teacher on the island, the children 'not only read fluently in the Samoan Bible but turn up readily chapter & verse'.⁵¹ Literacy and the

possession of books quickly became status symbols and diligence at school was encouraged by the competitions, tests and prize-giving that became associated with the annual visitations of the European missionaries. Even more importantly, literacy became one of the requirements for church membership and consequent admission to an inner circle of village society.

The acceptance of Christianity was rapid, but not without resistance. Inevitably there was dislike of the restrictions on dancing and other customary pastimes; there was opposition from religious and political leaders who lost power to the pastors. In a rare instance of mass rejection, a group of Nikunau elders managed to persuade the community to again 'indulge in their old heathen dances and the obscene practices done at that time' and it took some time before the pastor could regain his influence.⁵² More commonly, resistance came from traditional priests who stood to lose their wealth derived from contributions as well as spiritual and temporal power.⁵³ In the Ellice Islands the priests were usually the last to join the Christian camp. For example, the 'heathen party' at Niutao numbered about twenty in 1871; twelve years later their numbers had dwindled to two old men, former priests, who allowed their families to attend church but preferred to die worshipping their traditional gods.⁵⁴

There was also an understandable scepticism among Islanders when they were asked to accept some aspects of Christian beliefs and to believe in the literal truth of the Bible. An immediate leap of faith was needed because it was often the miraculous events that were emphasised in order to demonstrate the power of the Christian god. In former times, the people had used the supernatural to explain and to attempt, through ritual, to control the natural. It was believed, for example, that climatic phenomena were a guide to the future; that the gods could, and did, influence life and death, fortunes in love and war. Religion always explained what had happened; misfortune had its origin in human failing. Many of these beliefs, and others, like healing by divine intervention, could be carried over into the type of Christianity brought by the pastors with its strong emphasis on the rewards of heaven and the punishments of hell. Except for the tales shrouded in the folklore of the remote past, the Islanders had never before been asked to believe, in any immediate sense, in the miraculous— to them, the impossible. Their scepticism when told of raising the dead, of walking on water, the exploits of Jonah, or multiplying loaves and fishes, was understandable. It is not surprising that many conformed in terms of outward behaviour, but had reservations on some aspects of doctrine. And, as Powell found at Niutao, faith, and a basic biological knowledge could also confirm the Pagan's confidence in his own gods:

Matea asked how Jesus came to earth? I answered that he became man by being born of a virgin. He shook his head, gave a contemptuous smile and said, 'It could not be true'.⁵⁵

As a matter of policy the LMS tried to make its churches the centre for all village activities, whether or not these were specifically religious in character, and adherents were encouraged to form communities based on a common religious experience. On Arorae, for example, the first converts moved to a special compound surrounded by a palisade and guarded by watchmen in order to be freed from the attentions of toddy-drinking Pagans.⁵⁶ Within a few years there were only two villages on the island, with a central school in between, and the old *kainga* hamlets had been abandoned. Samuelu, the Samoan pastor responsible, had also persuaded the people to demolish all the houses in the new settlement around his station, to construct a road the length of the island, and to build identical houses for each family equidistant from the road and from each other.⁵⁷ The overall effect was marred somewhat when Samuelu's masterpiece, a new coral limestone church, fell victim to a westerly storm shortly after completion.⁵⁸ A similar fate befell the first church built at Vaitupu but such was the enthusiasm of the people that they built another large enough to accommodate the island's entire population three times over and adorned it with twenty-one glass windows and seven sets of double glass doors procured from New Zealand.⁵⁹

From the outset, those who attended church were expected to wear garments made from imported cloth. For the men, particularly those who became office-bearers, singlets and multi-coloured trade-cloth lava-lavas gradually gave way to shirts, waistcoats and lava-lavas in white or sober plain colours. The women wore either 'mother hubbards' or skirts and blouses, although the latter, like the dresses, were often left open to facilitate the nursing of infants. Hats were compulsory for women, although at Arorae, when the church became overcrowded, all hats were left lying on the ground outside the church door.⁶⁰ In making their hats the women had few models to follow and their creations sometimes seemed bizarre to outside observers. Cyprian Bridge, Commander of the *Espiègle* thought the standardised Vaitupu hat with its high, beribboned cone to be a 'highly comical' replica of a stage brigand's hat.⁶¹ Mrs Edgeworth David, a visitor to Funafuti with her husband's coral-boring expedition in 1897, found that the women wore

a small Tyrolese hat...held in place by two frayed strings of soiled white calico; the hat itself covered with scraps of red, white, blue, pink or yellow print—a veritable crazy hat, occasionally ornamented with a tarnished brass button, a dragged feather, a dirty artificial flower, or streamers of red and blue worsted braid, and sometimes all of these together.⁶²

Apart from dress, other features gave the churches a distinctively island character. Men and adolescent youths were segregated from the women and infants while the young children sat in groups patrolled by deacons who maintained discipline with the aid of long poles. Special provisions, often in the form of a 'box' or raised platform, were made for traditional leaders, the pastor's family, and visiting dignitaries.

Office-bearers were given insignia or distinctive uniforms to confirm their status.⁶³ From 1875 the pastors were empowered to celebrate communion but did so, as elsewhere in the Pacific, with local substitutes, usually coconut milk and taro. As well as being practical, these modifications to the communion service often served as a link with the past without necessarily debasing the ceremony or undermining its significance. Again, without having seen the rituals performed in their European context, some incongruity was inevitable even if it seldom reached the stage it did at Funafuti where the ire of the visiting missionary was roused by the use of 'a brown crockery teapot with broken lid and spout, and...two common German beer glasses with their metal tops broken.'⁶⁴

In establishing a new mission, the pastors sought the protection of island authorities and a degree of community tolerance. Then, as soon as they could do so in safety, they launched an assault on any vestiges of 'heathenish' belief or behaviour. To demonstrate the supremacy of their god they urged the destruction of shrines, the burial of skulls and other relics, and the killing of totems.⁶⁵ As a constant reminder to the new converts, traditionally sacred objects were recycled for profane uses with the teachers inviting, but never suffering, the vengeance of former deities. At Arorae, for example, the smashing of sacred stones and the burial of ancestral skulls was followed by the demolition of shrines and the incorporation of their timber into a house built for the pastor; logs which had represented the spirits became a frame for his grindstone; a clam-shell receptacle for offerings became a wash-tub for his clothes.⁶⁶

The mission was prepared to be patient while the convert gained an understanding in doctrinal matters, but an immediate compliance with a basic code of behaviour was demanded. Sabbath observance was obligatory and, once a foothold in government had been secured, usually made compulsory for the whole community. Any work—including fishing, cooking (except for the sick), or trading—was prohibited under pain of a fine. On some islands church-going was mandatory; on others it was left to individual conscience. 'Decent' garb, for adults and children, was a high priority for many of the visiting European missionaries. For them clothes were inseparable from civilisation as they understood it, and on their fleeting visits sartorial standards were an important indication of the progress made by the mission. When the *John Williams* visited Arorae in 1871 Vivian was appalled by the nakedness of the men; when Turner visited the island some seven years later he rejoiced to see the people 'washed, and clothed, and in their right minds.'⁶⁷ Dancing was seen as a sign of sinful decadence and was banned unless words and gestures had been cleansed and approved by the pastor. Because flower garlands were associated with dancing they too were forbidden at any church activity.⁶⁸

Infanticide, abortion, and all sexual relationships that existed outside the confines of monogamous marriage were regarded as the

areas of most serious difference between custom and Christianity. In the Ellice Islands, infanticide had been the most common form of birth control but, because any occurrence was easily detected, church pressure could be brought to bear. It was only a few years before the practice had virtually died out and there had been a discernible increase in population as a consequence.⁶⁹ The incidence of abortion in the Gilberts almost certainly declined but neither the mission nor, later, the colonial government could entirely eliminate the practice. This was partly because there remained a perceived need for abortion and also because some matters, like abortion and incest, were seen by the Gilbertese as a private family concern beyond the competence of either church or state. To some extent this attitude extended to the sexual aspects of *tinaba* and *eiriki* relationships which, together with polygamy, were attacked by the mission. In the Ellice Islands most polygamous relationships were terminated, at least in theory, with surplus wives returning to their families. In the southern Gilberts it was not always possible to insist that a man's concubines, younger sisters of his wife, should leave his household, firstly because of Gilbertese resistance and, secondly, because the women affected would have become *nikiranroro*. To overcome the problem, existing relationships were permitted to continue on some islands.⁷⁰

While the missionaries created many new laws they also modified the harshness of the punishment for some customary offences. On most islands those guilty of incest, murder, adultery or theft could be summarily killed, banished, or set adrift in a canoe. The pastors could do little to change the attitude towards murderers but in at least one case the pastor, with the aid of a visiting missionary, managed to save the life of a man convicted of incest.⁷¹ Gradually, as their influence increased, the pastors tried to introduce standardised law codes with fines as the most common form of punishment. Such fines could not be levied, however, until the church was seen as having a legitimate voice in government and the governing authority recognised the principles espoused by the church as a basis for law. Before this stage was reached the only real sanction against misconduct was exclusion from the church and from mission schools. Once a majority of the community supported the church, however, the pressures to conformity could be considerable.

In the 1870s and 1880s there was a steady evolution of new governments in the islands occupied by the LMS. In the Ellice Islands the chiefs were usually given honorific positions if they were church supporters but real power was increasingly vested in the pastor and councillors, most of whom were also deacons. In many cases those chosen as councillors had traditionally played important roles in village councils but their power now became dependent on their acceptance of a dominant role for the pastor and for Christianity. As in Samoa, the younger men were deputed to carry out the judgments of their elders; the fines collected were shared among the councillors and, despite the discouragement of some missionaries, the pastors.⁷²

On some islands policemen were appointed by the deacons, on others every man was invited to become his brother's keeper and vigilance was rewarded by a fee or a share of the fine when a conviction was secured. Mission innovations began a gradual change in the nature of law that was to be continued by the colonial government. The principle of compensation for theft, adultery, murder and other offences began to lose ground to the Western concept of punishment by, and for the benefit of, a centralised law-making authority.

In almost all the law codes that had evolved by the 1890s, adultery or fornication appeared first on the list of crimes. Other offences common to most codes included theft, fighting, dancing, tattooing, piercing ears, telling lies, and failure to observe the Sabbath. Fines were expressed in either dollars (usually debased South American currency introduced by traders) or coconuts with an approximate rate of exchange of 200 nuts to the dollar; on some islands offenders performed public works in lieu of fines. In the Ellice Islands most offences carried fines ranging from \$3 to \$15; in the Gilberts, fines were sometimes ten times higher and, on Tamana and Arorae, sexual offences were punished by flogging as well. Any offence that was seen as an affront to the church was punished more severely. At Nukufetau, for example, fornication usually carried a fine of 300 coconuts but, if the offence was committed on a Sunday, the fine was 1300 nuts; at Vaitupu, there was a \$2 loading on the usual fine when fornication was committed on church property. Insults or bad language directed at the pastor were regarded seriously, and usually listed as separate offences. Some authorities were content with a broad statement of crimes and punishments, while others tried to legislate in minute detail. For example, there were attempts to control relationships between parents and children, to ensure that all households kept a lamp burning at night, to insist that people bathing on the Sabbath should wear a lava-lava, and that no one should visit his neighbour on the Sabbath.⁷³ Some of the visiting missionaries tried to suppress these 'frivolous' laws but most believed that close control over all aspects of village life was essential for the progress of 'the work'.⁷⁴

With time, the distinctions between sacred and secular tended to disappear and the pastors emerged as paramount leaders over a series of strikingly similar theocracies. In part, their power was derived from the church, and the importance placed by Islanders on literacy and the new faith. At least as important was the pastors' invincible conviction that they were personally and racially superior to their flocks. From the outset they insisted on the deferential treatment usually reserved for the titled élite in Samoa. They insisted on a life of leisure outside direct pastoral duties, their food was provided and cooked by the villagers, the faithful paid their pastor in coconuts and then made copra for him, the pastor's house was invariably the grandest in the village. The missionaries quickly rebuked or removed any pastor unable to avoid an open confrontation with chiefs or community

leaders but for the most part they accepted as natural or inevitable the supremacy and material comfort of the pastor—after all, he was a living example of the accomplishments that could follow from Christianity and civilisation. Thus Charles Phillips in 1884 found himself at Onotoa ‘comfortably lodged in the beautiful house of Simona’ where

A fine chandelier was suspended in the middle of the room, American cloth covered the tables and foreign curtains surrounded the beds...⁷⁵

After sixteen years on the island Simona returned to Samoa with an estimated seven tons of personal possessions in ‘monster cases’.⁷⁶ George Pratt, another missionary, implied no criticism of the pastor at Nukufetau when, as early as 1872, he reported that ‘He, with his large stone houses, and retinue of 23 servants, altogether overtops the king.’⁷⁷ In addition to food and services the pastor received a stipend (usually about \$100 by the 1880s) and, in many cases, gifts and other benefits as well. For example, the pastor at Nanumea sold copra on his own account to the value of \$250 between 1879 and 1882.⁷⁸

The missionaries were not unqualified in their support of the pastors. Any slackness, immorality, or failure to retain the support of their congregations was promptly investigated and dealt with. Most of the islands lost at least one pastor who ‘fell into error’ or was too enthusiastic in his pursuit of wealth or political power. At Arorae, for example, the missionaries found in the early 1880s that one pastor had deserted his wife for an Arorae woman, and that the other traded, regularly helped himself to the goods of repatriated labourers, and had acted as agent for a French recruiting vessel. At the opposite end of the scale a group of young men at Tamana sought their revenge for being fined for fishing past midnight on Saturday by bringing a charge of Sabbath-breaking against the pastor who had shot a cat he found eating his Sunday dinner.⁷⁹ Because their visits were a year apart, and they spent only a day or two at each island, missionaries knew little beyond what the pastors told them of events on the island. Generally, too, the charge had to be serious before Islanders would complain directly to the visiting missionary. The episcopal role that European missionaries tended to adopt in relation to the Polynesian pastors was emphasised by the nature of the annual visitation. Some of the pastors posted to the north-west outstations of the Gilbert, Ellice and Tokelau Islands had only the rank of teacher, but after 1875 most had been ordained, were allowed to administer the sacraments and, significantly, were able to control admission to, and expulsions from their churches.

From time to time the missionaries were also called upon to arbitrate between island governments and resident traders, or to hear complaints from one about the other. Occasionally traders would set themselves in deliberate opposition to the mission because it interfered with their liquor trade, their marital arrangements, and generally curtailed their influence. In 1878 George Turner approached the High

Commissioner for the Western Pacific when the people of Funafuti wished to have an unpopular trader removed and, a few years later, Newell complained of the 'abominable and wicked practices' of gin-selling foreigners at Nikunau.⁸⁰ More common, however, were traders' complaints against bans imposed in an attempt to control prices, or against attempts to make traders subject to 'native laws' on such matters as Sabbath observance.⁸¹ Some traders, however, were regarded as model citizens. For example, at Tamana, Henry Schumacher, a trader of long-standing, was for a time a deacon of the church, and a member of, and adviser to, the island government.⁸²

As well as the resistance of the Pagans, and the opposition of some traders, the pastors also had to cope with the occasional attempt by Islanders to vary their spiritual diet. The LMS was the only mission officially working in the region until the late 1880s but a number of alternatives, usually variants of Roman Catholicism, were introduced by repatriated labourers from Tahiti and Samoa. This was seen at its most extreme on Onotoa and Nikunau where feather-covered crosses were carried at the head of chanting processions of supporters. To those tired of stringent Protestantism there may have also been some attractiveness in the large feasts which were held as part of the monthly meetings.⁸³ At Beru, a man who had worked on Tahiti and observed the '*lotu popi*', taught that 'any man may get drunk so long as he does not make a disturbance. Also that any man may commit adultery so long as he is not found out'.⁸⁴ In the 1870s more orthodox Catholicism had small followings at Funafuti and at Nanumea; in both cases, they were led by returned labourers and, given the nature of island politics, represented a protest at pastor authority as much as religious enthusiasm.⁸⁵ One group of Arorae Islanders returned from Tahiti in the late 1870s confessing Mormonism but they, too, soon faded once their self-appointed teacher was converted to Protestantism.⁸⁶

In twenty-five years, between 1865 and 1890, the LMS grew into a virtually unchallenged power in the Ellice and southern Gilbert Islands. Protestant Christianity brought about a social revolution that was no less remarkable for its rapidity than for its apparent completeness. But alongside the new rituals, new laws and new lifestyle, many apparently discredited traditional beliefs and values still survived. They were seldom discussed, however, as 'the years of darkness', like tattoos and pierced ears, were soon regarded with shame. The pastors were important in determining the nature and pace of change. The new religion served to increase the frequency of contacts with the outside world and, at the same time, it offered literacy and a new set of beliefs, already modified to conform more easily to traditional values, more in keeping with the Islanders' changing world. Even in the southern Gilberts where, faced with the ultra-conservatism of the Gilbertese, the LMS was never quite as powerful as it was in the Ellice Islands, the contrast with the efforts of the American Board in the north was marked. Bingham laboured for a

lifetime for a handful of converts, and when he visited the LMS field of operations in 1868 he viewed the results with wonder tinged with envy:

We shall not soon forget this delightful visit; though the contrast of one year and eight months' missionary labor here [at Vaitupu] with those of six years and a half at Apaiang could not be otherwise than—I had almost said—painful.⁸⁷

The Protestant monopoly over Christianity in the Gilbert Islands ended in May 1888 with the arrival at Nonouti of priests of the Sacred Heart Mission which had just embarked on a new mission to Oceania; its attention was drawn to the Gilberts by Marist priests who had worked among plantation labourers in Samoa and Tahiti.⁸⁸ When they returned to their home island at the conclusion of their contracts some of these Gilbertese converts practised garbled parodies of their chosen faith for a time, but there were also a few who were constant to the basic tenets of Catholicism and tried to convert their fellow Islanders. In the Protestant south they generally proved no match for the Samoan pastors but on Nonouti, which had received only desultory attention from the American Board, they were better received. Here the Catholic adherents were kept together by two of their number, Betero and Tiroi, and given moral support by Frank Even, a Frenchman trading on the island. Their repeated requests to the Marists in Samoa for a priest were sent on to the Missionnaires du Sacré Coeur (the Sacred Heart Mission) which responded by sending three of its New Guinea missionaries—Father Edouard Bontemps, Father Joseph Leray, and Brother Conrad Weber—to the Gilberts in 1888.⁸⁹

In its early years the Mission concentrated on bringing as many people as possible within the orbit of its influence; thus the emphasis was on schools for children and a drive for the baptism of people of all ages. In less than two years the MSC claimed about 1500 adherents—half Nonouti's population.⁹⁰ Bontemps, the leader of the mission, was anxious to challenge the Protestant domination of the south and in October 1888 readily answered an appeal from Frank Even who, by this time, was trading on Nikunau where he, an Irish trader and a small group of Gilbertese Catholics found themselves the constant victims of Protestant intolerance. The commander of the *Fabert*, a French man-of-war, took Bontemps to Nikunau where he secured some relief for his small flock but it hardly outlasted his visit and within a short time the combined powers of Protestant church and state were again supreme.⁹¹ The incident is important, however, as it marked the beginnings of a bitter and destructive rivalry that was to last for half a century or more, with the Protestants determined to retain their southern stronghold and the MSC equally determined to

establish a presence within it. In the meantime, however, the MSC found progress easier in the northern and central islands where the American Board held its influence virtually by default. In answer to another appeal, this time from the victims of Kapu's tyranny, Bontemps went to Tabiteuea in 1891. The southerners, who had been defeated in 1880 by Kapu's army, were now joined in their opposition to him by those from the north who resented the laws and financial demands of his government. Catholicism offered an alternative religion as well as protection—it was believed that Kapu would not attack the followers of a European missionary—a situation that Bontemps was not slow to capitalise upon.⁹² Because he had insufficient staff to establish permanent stations Bontemps led short missions on a number of islands in an attempt to gain a foothold. He met with little enthusiasm at Butaritari, where the *Uea*, Bureimoa, was in the midst of his revival, and although he was permitted to hold a service at Abemama, Binoka excused himself on the grounds that he was 'too wicked' to attend.⁹³ It was not until the 1890s that the arrival of more missionaries allowed the MSC to spread its influence more widely; then it had to contend not only with Protestant resistance but also with a colonial government determined to eliminate religious conflict and to prevent any mission interference in the secular affairs of the island governments.

In its first few years the MSC enjoyed considerable success. By 1892 it claimed more than 2000 converts, most of them on Nonouti and Tabiteuea. Two years later the number of baptised adherents exceeded 5000 and the influence of the mission spread rapidly in the islands north of the Equator throughout the 1890s.⁹⁴ This was partly because the American Board had never been able to overcome the fundamental chiefly and district divisions that characterised island politics. Catholicism thus offered an alternative faith for those who, for political reasons, would not align themselves with the church of their traditional rivals. Lacking any real secular backing, the Hawaiian missionaries were unable to offer the type of resistance organised by the Samoans at Nikunau. With his mission to Nonouti in 1890 Walkup put forward some heart-felt opposition to the 'Mission of the Bleeding Heart' as he called it, but although he rallied the Protestant cause for a time, he could not, in four months, compete with the permanent presence of the MSC.⁹⁵

It was significant also that the MSC relied on European missionaries—using Gilbertese only under direct supervision as catechists—because, as pastors, Pacific Islanders were regarded only as second-best by the Gilbertese. Thus priests were seen as being original title-holders to the technology, material wealth and skills of literacy that figured prominently in the perceived benefits of Christianity; it was an impression fostered by gifts of tobacco, medallions, pictures and books distributed by the priests.⁹⁶ The priests were also willing to pay for building materials and food; although the faithful were encouraged to contribute, they were not compelled to do

so as a price of participating in church activities. The priests were always careful to give more than they received, and to rely on individual conscience rather than levies among their adherents. By comparison, the avarice and luxurious lifestyles of many Samoan pastors were well known; some Hawaiian missionaries were accused of trading while others sponsored the immigration of trading relatives. Impressed with the popularity of Catholicism, Captain Davis of HMS *Royalist* questioned many of its early adherents and found that most explained their conversion in other than spiritual terms: 'Oh, that Roman Catholic missionary man, he no trade—he no fine—he give um book—no makee pay, Oh, he belong good man'.⁹⁷

While Bontemps and his colleagues were fierce in their advocacy of Catholicism in opposition to Protestantism they were rather more tolerant than their rivals when it came to morals and customary lifestyles. They were less insistent on outward conformity to specified standards of dress, for example, and although they drew the line at certain dances usually associated with sexual promiscuity, the priests found little to oppose in traditional singing and dancing. Where the American Board considered the use of tobacco as a sign of sinful degeneracy, the priests used it to pay for food and labour.

The priests were, as the Samoan pastors had been, aggressive in their approach to conversion. Bontemps and, to a lesser degree, Leray believed in open confrontation with the 'heresy' of Protestantism and the 'ignorance' of Paganism. In villages where they did not have churches, the priests traded on their status as visitors to stay, and then to preach, in the *maneaba*—the seat of village government.⁹⁸ Such moves were sometimes construed as a challenge to established authority, and often tolerated only because their perpetrators were Europeans, but they guaranteed the widest possible dissemination of their ideas. The theological disputations that took place between priest and pastor entertained a people who made a pastime of debating the merits of ancestors both spiritual and mortal.

The Sacred Heart Mission arrived in the Gilberts at a stage when Gilbertese society had already been changed by contact with Europeans and when most of the people had already gained a basic understanding of Christian belief, whether or not they were adherents, and could see educational and other benefits following from the missions. Thus they were concerned less with the issue of whether or not to profess a belief in Christianity than with a choice between competing persuasions. Where Protestantism had already been entrenched before their arrival, the Catholic missionaries made little progress, but elsewhere they provided an attractive alternative to Protestantism as presented by the pastors. Initially, the choice was not construed in doctrinal terms; more important were the numbers and energy of the Catholic missionaries, their schools, their material generosity and their tolerance of custom.

While missionaries sometimes tended to see the Christian message in

isolation, to the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders it was but a part of the cultural package introduced by Europeans. Unless it was modified to meet local needs and aspirations there was no place for a foreign ethos until many of the other values and habits of that foreign lifestyle had also been observed and adopted. Thus it is not surprising that missionaries met with early success in the Ellice Islands, where a Samoanised form of Christianity was presented, and in the southern Gilberts where first the whalers and then the labour trade brought the Islanders into sustained contact with Europeans. By the 1890s, however, Protestant and Roman Catholic missions were in competition with one another and, on some islands, sectarian disputes were pursued enthusiastically as a new expression of traditional rivalries. The colonial government assumed the role of arbiter and peacemaker. Yet, at the same time, it was also in competition with the missions for the control of Islanders' lives and for a share of their resources—resources so scarce that, at times, overseas labour migration became the only alternative to starvation.

CHAPTER FOUR

The labour trade and imperial intervention

In the Gilbert Islands, if not in the Ellice, migration was more important than missionaries as an agent of change in the 19th century. From the 1840s men signed on with the whalers who began to visit the islands; a few women, consorts to the whalers, were carried within and beyond the group. The scarcity of resources restricted commercial development but, as European entrepreneurs moved into other island groups, and into the rapidly developing countries on the Pacific rim, they sought labour to make their farms, mines and plantations prosper.¹ The Gilbertese, with few other means of obtaining the products of western technology and faced with the ever-pervading threat of drought, gradually developed an enthusiasm for labour migration. Between 1860 and 1900 some 9300 adults, from a population in the 1860s of a little more than 30 000, worked away from their home islands. In the Gilberts, as elsewhere in the Pacific, recruiting was not always orderly, misunderstandings leading to violence sometimes occurred, and not all recruiters were scrupulous. Just as dissension over land, labour, and the right to govern attracted imperial attention in the emergent plantation societies of the Pacific, so the labour trade and increasing European settlement were the most important factors in the expansion of that imperial concern to the more remote island groups.

Recruiting from the Gilbert Islands began in 1847 when a score of men from Tamana and Arorae were engaged for Benjamin Boyd, the New South Wales station owner and businessman. The venture was a failure. The Gilbertese were totally unprepared for their new life and most deserted their new employment, made their way back to Sydney and were later repatriated.² Then, in the 1850s, French recruiters (kidnappers in most cases) entered the Gilberts. Most of the labourers they obtained went to New Caledonia but at least forty men from the southern Gilberts crossed the Indian Ocean to Réunion in 1857.³

Large-scale recruiting began in the early 1860s with the arrival of vessels seeking settler families for Peru. With the prospect of high financial rewards, the recruiters showed few scruples. In 1863 the Ellice Islands were visited by the *Hermosa Dolores*, the *Polinesia* and the *Honorio*. Nukulaelae and Funafuti, which both had populations of about 300, had 250 and 171 people respectively seized by the recruiters, three were taken at Nukufetau but two of these escaped at Rotuma. The *Adelante* took 151 recruits from the Gilberts, most of them from Beru, and 21 from Nanumea. None of these was repatriated.

The *Ellen Elizabeth*, with 161 Gilbertese, most of them from Onotoa and Arorae, on board, reached Peru after pressure from France and Britain had brought the scheme to an end. A return trip to the Pacific was thus made necessary and, whatever their islands of origin, all Islanders on board were landed at Penrhyn in the northern Cook group. Of the Gilbertese, only 110 survived, most of whom worked on Fanning and Washington Islands before finally being repatriated, while a few were taken to Tahiti where their good work record was to encourage subsequent recruiting from the Gilberts.⁴ In the Ellice Islands, the Peruvian incident marked both the beginning and the end of large-scale recruiting. Once a modicum of control had been established over the labour trade, the numbers available from the Ellice Islands simply did not warrant the diversion of ships to the area. Those that did find themselves near the group sometimes called, usually in search of water and provisions, and were able to engage small numbers of recruits.

Fiji was the most important destination for Gilbertese labourers. Not only did it attract the greatest numbers, some 3000 between 1866 and 1895, but it also provided the closest and most regular outlet for those wishing to work overseas. Recruiting, mostly for cotton but later for coconut plantations, began in the New Hebrides in 1864 and in the Gilberts in 1866. In the following decade at least 2000 Gilbertese labourers reached Fiji (500 of them in 1868) and a further thousand were recruited between 1876 and 1895.⁵ In Fiji, New Hebrideans were preferred because they were regarded as 'docile and industrious' compared with the Gilbertese who were found to be of 'idle habits and violent temper'.⁶ The recruiters had little choice, however, because in the New Hebrides they were facing competition from Queensland recruiters offering higher wages and better conditions while in the southern Gilberts emigration was made popular by a serious drought. From the late 1870s the trade declined partly because of stricter government control but also because recruiters from other plantation areas were competing for Gilbertese labour. Moreover, Fiji's brittle prosperity of the late 1860s and the early 1870s collapsed with a fall in cotton prices and from the 1880s Fiji increasingly met the demand for labourers in the sugar industry with indentured Indians. Because of their high mortality rate in sugar areas, most Gilbertese were employed making copra. Two hundred were recruited in 1883, and over a hundred in 1891 when drought conditions again prevailed, but in most years there were fewer than fifty recruits introduced on voyages primarily intended for the repatriation of time-expired labourers.

From the 1860s to the early 1880s, Samoa provided the most competition for recruits. With the Samoans selling their land (sometimes several times over) to finance wars over title succession, and with the Hamburg firm of J.C. Godeffroy und Sohn investing large amounts of capital, there was a rapid expansion of cotton and coconut plantations. By the early 1870s Godeffroys alone were

employing about 400 labourers, most of whom came from the southern Gilberts. In all, some 2500 Gilbertese worked in Samoa between 1867 and 1890,⁷ but they seldom enjoyed the experience because of the harshness of German discipline. This, together with delays in repatriation, made Samoa an unpopular destination; when the *Myrtle*, licenced to recruit 250 labourers, visited the Gilberts in 1885, it returned after four months with only eight.⁸ The Germans, with new fields open to them in the Marshalls and the Solomons, ignored the Gilberts for a decade. They continued to regard it as a reserve area, however, and urged British annexation in line with the 1886 Anglo-German partition of the Pacific once recruiting for Central American plantations began in the 1890s. Despite such protestations, however, only a hundred Gilbertese were subsequently recruited for Samoa where, as in Fiji, they had become unpopular with their employers. Cusack-Smith, the British Consul, believed that it was because the Germans found that 'without the whip, and imprisonment and irons they cannot get the same work out of the Gilbert Islanders as formerly'.⁹ Nor could they recruit them in the same manner.

Tahiti was another unpopular destination because of the methods used by the recruiters and the failure of either the employers or the French Administration to meet the obligations of repatriation. Between 1867 and 1872 about 700 Gilbertese went to Tahiti to provide labour for cotton, sugar and coconut plantations which were being established with the help of government subsidies. The Gilbertese accounted for nearly three-quarters of the Pacific Islanders engaged and their numbers were approximately matched by those of indentured Chinese. Most of the labourers were employed on the estates of William Stewart at *Terre Eugénie*. Stewart was a man of great vision but few scruples. He concentrated heavily upon cotton but by the early 1870s a collapsed market, mismanagement, and his own dishonest financial dealings saw him declared a bankrupt with his enterprise in ruins. Some of his Gilbertese employees found their own way home but most remained to become fishermen and farmers;¹⁰ a few earned for the 'Arorais,' as Gilbertese were called, a reputation for drunkenness and violence on the streets of Papeete. Then, after a lull of more than a decade, the French Administration itself mounted a recruiting venture in the Gilberts in an effort to boost a sagging plantation economy. In 1884 the *Forçade de la Roquette* returned with more than 150 recruits but it then became known that eighty-five men and women from Nonouti had been sold into bondage by Tem Binoka of Abemama, and most were immediately repatriated. In the light of criticism directed at the recruiters and, more importantly, because the Government had lost money on the exercise, French recruiting in the Gilbert Islands was brought to an end but as late as 1910 Gilbertese recruited in the 1870s were still being repatriated.¹¹

In Hawaii, the initial burden of plantation labour was carried by the Hawaiians themselves. In marked contrast to the experience elsewhere

in the Pacific, more than half Hawaii's able-bodied men were in plantation employment by the early 1870s.¹² But the Hawaiian population was declining as plantations were expanding and some external source of labour was required. Despite the failure of an earlier venture in 1868-72, the Hawaiian Government again turned to Oceania after its attempt to obtain Indians had been rebuffed by Britain. Between 1878 and 1887, 2400 migrants from other Pacific Islands were introduced. About 1800 of these, including about 700 women and 300 children, were Gilbertese. The Hawaiian hope was for a revitalisation of their race, but in spite of the relatively good conditions the Gilbertese always saw themselves as transients, not settlers. Few of the Gilbertese married Hawaiians and those who settled did so with reluctance.

Recruiting from the Gilberts declined steadily throughout the 1880s. The droughts of the 1870s had passed, and recruiting had been sustained at a sufficiently high level over the preceding two decades to satisfy curiosity and wanderlust. Some, however, chose to repeat the experience and in this period there were many who left the Gilberts for a second or third time.¹³ In the early 1890s, a recurrence of drought, and intensive recruiting for Central American coffee plantations, saw an upsurge in emigration. In 1890 the *Helen W. Almy* secured 300 recruits for Guatemala and another 300 (together with 100 children) signed on with the *Tahiti* in the following year. The latter vessel overturned with a loss of all on board off the coast of Mexico in one of the surprisingly few shipping disasters associated with the labour trade. In 1892, under the watchful eye of Captain Davis of HMS *Royalist*, the *Montserrat* recruited a further 400 labourers for Guatemala and a number of European traders to act as overseers.¹⁴ Of the 700 recruited by the *Helen W. Almy* and the *Montserrat* only 200 were repatriated. In Guatemala mortality rates were high, a few were re-engaged, and the others forced by infrequent shipping and a lack of official interest to remain as free settlers.¹⁵

The final episode in the 19th century labour trade in the Gilbert Islands came in 1895 when recruiters from Queensland, the destination for some 60 000 Pacific Islands labour migrants, went beyond their usual sphere of operations in Melanesia and obtained 165 Gilbertese and 32 Ellice Islands recruits.¹⁶ Only two voyages were made, however, because Sir John Thurston, High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, protested at this encroachment and argued that Fiji offered more suitable and familiar conditions for the Gilbertese.¹⁷

Over a thirty-five year period, then, at least 9300 adult Gilbertese, nearly one-tenth of all Pacific Islands' labour migrants, worked away from their home islands. This figure represents absences rather than individuals (some of whom may have served two or more terms), but it must be remembered that recruiting was heavily concentrated in the years 1867-80 when nearly 6000 absences are recorded, and re-engagement tended to be characteristic of the later period. The figure

also represents the minimum number of absences and does not, for example, include those who were landed in Fiji before 1874 without the knowledge of the British Consul.¹⁸

Attachments to land and kin were so strong that few sought to stay away permanently but from the late 19th century labour migration became an essential part of the Gilbertese way of life. Recruiting methods, expectations, work experience and rewards have changed dramatically in the past hundred years but, except for the early years of the trade, there is little to suggest that the recruits were other than willing, or the experience a disappointment. On the contrary, the opportunities have been perceived, and used, as compensating for a natural state in which there has always been a scarcity of resources and an abundance of people.

The evidence for migration being used as an escape from hardship and drought is overwhelming. In the early 1870s whalers found the Banabans starving and unable to trade; out of pity, the captain of the *Arnolda* took twenty-four Banabans, some of whom could hardly stand, to Kusaie in 1873.¹⁹ Two years later, Queensland labour vessels also found the Banabans willing to be recruited and, within a few years, the situation on the island had become so bad that 'practically all the children died, [and] in fact when it was realised how serious conditions were the female children were killed; even among the adults the death toll was alarmingly high.'²⁰ Recruiters for Hawaii in 1880 found plenty of volunteers but could only take those capable of withstanding the journey to the depot at Jaluit; a hundred Banabans being repatriated from Tahiti re-engaged when they saw the state of their island.²¹ In 1872 George Pratt of the LMS found people in the southern Gilberts starving because of the drought and reported that 'Hundreds had left in slavers being told that there was plenty to eat in Fiji and no work.'²² A few years later his colleague, George Turner, reported that more than 200 deaths had been caused by drought on Tamana in 1877 and that a further 120 had sought refuge in labour vessels.²³ Henry Schumacher, a resident trader on Tamana, believed that the drought of the 1870s was, overall, responsible for several hundred deaths on that island alone.²⁴ At Onotoa, another of the southern Gilberts, the people were sometimes reduced to eating a type of mud-like algae found on the tidal flats. Recruiting became a substitute for some of the traditional Malthusian checks on the population but could in no way totally eliminate deaths by starvation in times of drought.

The harsh environment placed the Gilberts in an exceptional situation with regard to recruiting and most of the Islanders who became involved in the labour trade did so willingly even if they did not understand in detail the contracts and working conditions to which they committed themselves. In the early years of the trade, however, especially in areas which had seen little previous contact, misunderstandings, deceit and violence were common enough. It was not until the Islanders had learned to weigh the relative costs and

benefits of recruiting, and not until effective imperial control had been established, that the trade could be described as an orderly migration. But as early as 1870 Henry Challis, commanding HMS *Rosario*, was able to report:

There is considerable migration from the Gilbert group into Fiji but the Chiefs informed me that it was quite voluntary and that they had no complaints to make against the masters of the vessels engaged in their conveyance.²⁵

In the Gilbert Islands much of the recruiting that took place before this time was either kidnapping or based on some degree of deceit; this is not to say, however, that those so taken necessarily regretted the experience once it had been thrust upon them. But there were unscrupulous recruiters. At Nukulaelae and Funafuti, for example, recruiters from Peru enlisted the services of one Tom Rose, a self-styled religious teacher. With promises of Bibles and religious instruction the unsuspecting Islanders boarded ship for what they believed would be a short visit to a nearby island.²⁶ It was the recruiters from Tahiti, however, whose 'men-stealing vessels' became the most feared. This was hardly surprising. Walter Oates, a seaman on the *Moaroa* in the late 1860s, admitted that in the Gilberts his ship obtained five willing recruits at Nikunau but had no success in three days at Beru whereupon the captain and some of the crew went ashore for about five hours where 'they had great sport in the bush' securing thirty-seven recruits. On two further occasions they collected twenty-two recruits in like manner. Next the ship went to Onotoa where four boats went ashore on a night raid and brought back eighty-seven men and women. At Tamana the boats were not allowed to land but three canoes, containing about ninety people, were capsized and their occupants taken on board. At Arorae 'thirty-eight young women were all made fast by the hair of their head and led into the boat' after their menfolk had been subdued by a display of arms.²⁷

Similar recruiting methods were used by the notorious Dr Murray of the *Carl* as late as 1873. (On an earlier voyage to the Solomons he had suppressed an outbreak in the hold by firing on recruits and then throwing the dead and dying overboard.) Robert Randolph, following in the wake of the *Carl*, found, at Maiana, 'some canoes floating about, some smashed to pieces, others broken, others again turned bottom upwards'.²⁸ On other occasions Murray's crew and their Tanna boatmen rushed those who came on board to trade and thrust them into the hold. Other recruiters simply cashed in on the Gilbertese custom of sleeping on board visiting trading vessels and sailed away during the night.²⁹ The most blatant cases of kidnapping in the labour trade, like those perpetrated by the *Carl*, the *Daphne* and the *Young Australian*, usually came to public notice fairly quickly even if those responsible escaped punishment because of legal technicalities.³⁰ More difficult to detect, however, were the subtle deceptions of 'three moons' instead of three years, or the implication that recruiting gave

entry to a land of milk and honey.

In the face of kidnapping, or recruiting without consent, the Gilbertese did not remain passive for long. At Tamana and Arorae, for example, Samuel Whitmee of the LMS was greeted in 1870 with knives, hatchets and 'every kind of weapon they could find' until the people were assured that his intentions were peaceful.³¹ When a Fiji recruiter found himself short of supplies and off-loaded eighty Gilbertese to a Tahiti-bound vessel, they escaped from the hold, killed the captain and some of his crew and when the mate blew up a section of the ship, the survivors leapt over the side and swam to the close-by island of Nikunau.³² As late as 1892 a group of men from Nōnouti boarded the *Eastward Ho* and forced the release of a youth who had been recruited for Fiji legally, but without his parent's consent.³³ Often, in the 1870s and 1880s, the resistance came more from friends and relatives than from the recruits themselves. There are reports of young men being dragged from the recruiters' boats after signing on, and others of recruits swimming off at night or, in at least one instance at Nikunau, during Sunday service.³⁴

From the beginning of the trade, however, there were recruiters who were honest, often from conviction as much as from the fear of detection. One captain on the Fiji run believed himself dismissed because he refused to resort to deception and violence in order to secure a full complement of recruits.³⁵ And there were those like Robert Randolph who had interests in shipping and trade as well as recruiting in the Gilberts and thus behaved in such a way as to protect their future safety and profits.³⁶ All recruiters were wary on islands where missionaries or pastors were based, and the unscrupulous avoided them altogether, knowing that any malpractice would be trumpeted in the colonial press. The Hawaiian recruiters in particular were ever conscious of the American Board missionaries who had soon lost their enthusiasm for the trade once the high mortality among Gilbertese migrants to Hawaii became known.³⁷

While the less scrupulous recruiters were not averse to securing young women who, being lighter-skinned than Melanesians, were in demand in the bachelor-dominated planter societies, there was a heavy preponderance of young adult males among labour migrants in the 1860s and early 1870s; once recruiting became dependent on consent, however, a different pattern emerged. From the 1870s onwards, family recruiting became characteristic to a degree that made the Gilberts unique among labour-supply areas in the Pacific. On voyages for which data is available, more than 40 per cent of Gilbertese recruits were females.³⁸ By comparison, the percentage of women among New Hebridean and Solomon Islands recruits reaching Queensland and Fiji remained fairly constant at between 5 and 10 per cent.³⁹ Part of the explanation for this difference lay in the fact that Gilbertese males customarily married while in their early twenties and, unlike their Melanesian counterparts, did not have to wait until they had accumulated sufficient wealth to pay bride-price. And having

taken a wife the Gilbertese regarded her with jealous possessiveness—for an unchaperoned conversation with a man from outside the immediate family circle his honour would demand, at the very least, an attack with knife or spear on the stranger and, for the wife, a severe beating and, perhaps, the end bitten off her nose as a mark of her faithlessness. (The women, too, could be jealous and attacks on rivals, married or unmarried, were common enough.) Thus the absence of married men could breed jealousy, violence and discontent to a degree that would be disruptive in such small communities. The 'government' of Beru indicated to the Captain of the *Midge* in 1883 that it 'sanctioned recruiting amongst the unmarried and married also provided both man and wife went together'.⁴⁰ It was significant also that the Gilbertese lived in close family units with clear divisions of responsibility. For the men to be absent without the women imposed additional burdens on kin and, given that many Gilbertese signed on to avoid drought, the plight of women and children would have been worsened, not alleviated, by male-only recruiting.

The Gilbert Islands labour trade was unusual also for the number of unmarried women who were recruited. It is clear from recruiting records that some were the relatives or concubines of male recruits, but it is also clear that many more were *nikiranoro* who travelled alone or were accompanied only by their children. Divorced or 'fallen' women, widows or social outcasts, they faced an increasingly uncomfortable existence under the stern discipline of the Protestant pastors. They were freed from many of the customary restrictions and obligations but without indulgent lovers or tolerant families often found it difficult to support themselves and their children. Away from their home islands many formed alliances with male recruits on the ship or on the plantation which employed them, while a few of those who went to Fiji sought and found the good life in Levuka working as domestic servants—a term used to describe a wide spectrum of employer-employee relationships.

Women, both married and unmarried, were often accompanied by their children. Reasonably precise information on the migration of children (defined here as persons too young to be recruited as 'youths') is available for thirty-six voyages which account for about one-quarter of all known adult migrants. In these cases there were 560 children—one to every 4.5 adults.⁴¹ Allowing for the adult-male dominated recruiting of the 1860s, this would suggest that at least one thousand and perhaps as many as two thousand children left the group between 1860 and 1900. Thus the total outwards migration associated with the labour trade must have been in excess of 10 500 people.

The number of labourers who returned to their homes is much more difficult to establish. In the case of Fiji, for example, it is known that at least 600 of 1100 adults recruited between 1876 and 1895 were repatriated and 140, or 12.5 per cent, are known to have died in Fiji,

but this still leaves 360 unaccounted for.⁴² Most of those who went to Hawaii and Queensland were repatriated; three-quarters of those who went to Tahiti and Central America were not.⁴³ Overall, more than half of those who worked overseas were repatriated or made their way home. A net loss from labour recruiting of no more than 5000, and probably less than this, contributed towards an overall decline in the population from about 33 000 to about 26 000 over the second half of the 19th century, but drought, the campaigns of Baiteke and Binoka, the Tabiteuean war and endemic warfare in the north were other significant factors.⁴⁴ The Gilbertese and the Ellice Islanders had long kept their population in tune with resources. With pastors actively discouraging traditional methods of birth control in many of the islands it is probable that there were greater numbers of live births among those remaining on their islands. Moreover the high incidence of female recruiting prevented the emergence of a sex-imbalance in the population and did not leave significant numbers of women without marriage partners.

Demographically, the islands most affected by the labour trade were Funafuti and Nukulaelae which lost respectively half and four-fifths of their populations to recruiters from Peru; in the Gilberts the islands south of the Line were the major focus of recruiting for Fiji, Samoa and Tahiti from the 1860s to the 1880s. For example, Beru, from a population of about 2400, provided more than 350 recruits for Fiji and significant numbers for other destinations over a twenty-year period.⁴⁵ However it was Tamana and Arorae—small, heavily populated (about 900 and 1300 respectively) and drought-prone — which were most affected. Both had declining populations in the second half of the 19th century with, perhaps, up to one-third of their people working overseas.⁴⁶ The northern islands of the group were seldom visited by recruiters before the late 1870s when they became the major source of recruits for Hawaii and, in the 1890s, for Central America.

The returned labourers were of more than demographic significance. Each brought with him a 'box', to be shared with his relatives, of cloth, utensils, tools, tobacco and, sometimes, firearms and ammunition. These articles, introduced perhaps in greater quantities by returned labourers than by European traders, had an obvious and immediate impact on the material culture of the islands and served to accelerate the changes initiated by earlier contact. Even more important in the long term were the ideas and concepts to which the labourers had been exposed and which they spread on their return to the islands. Travel opened new, wider horizons; the insularity that had been challenged by European visitors was now called further into question by travelling Islanders. These remote islands, so long self-sufficient within their own limited environment, were drawn increasingly into a new world, and inexorably became dependent upon it. The Islanders saw this new world but seldom became an integral part of it. They saw and used the finished products of western

technology but seldom understood its processes. And they did not enter into this world on conditions of equality with those who were already its masters. The concept of wage labour was accepted and, given the poverty of the islands, henceforth seen as the path to economic advancement. Inevitably, however, those who were recruited worked as the servants, sometimes the slaves, of European masters. There was, as a consequence, a gradual evolution of stereotyped beliefs concerning the distribution of wealth and power—all were perceived in racial terms and these, together with demonstrations of technological sophistication, served to establish relationships and attitudes that were to be confirmed in the colonial era.

Only rarely did returned labourers seek to challenge or change the established social or political order. A few returned with religious enthusiasms of one description or another but it was seldom long before stronger, more orthodox, religious and political forces already at work absorbed their energies. Generally, too, the technological benefits were spread among the communities and tended to preserve the traditional distribution of power rather than assist in the creation of a new political order. The firearms that were introduced helped to transform combat from an affair between individuals to one between armies on some islands but with few discernible effects on the mortality of warfare or its ultimate outcome. Rather, traditional rivalries were continued but according to revised rules.

In one case, however, the firearms and opportunism of returned labourers were of major importance in transforming, at least for a time, the political organisation of an island. In January 1883 the *Julia*, from Hawaii, landed thirty Abaiang and Tarawa Islanders at Nonouti. Armed with sixteen-shot Winchester Repeaters, and led by one Nimatu who had taken the name of the Hawaiian King Kalakaua, they soon succeeded in terrorising the north of the island. So desperate were their poorly armed victims (and desperate they must have been) that they appealed to Tem Binoka. The old potentate, who had had his sights on the island for some time, promptly chartered a trading vessel, the *Kate McGregor*, took more than a hundred well-armed men on her to Nonouti, and proceeded to liberate the island. In his zeal, Binoka also shot several of his erstwhile supplicants, established a trading monopoly, took 120 prisoners back to Abemama, and subsequently permitted a recruiting vessel to carry off eighty-five of his new subjects to Tahiti. To his personal flag (a white diagonal cross on a blue background) he added a fourth star to represent the addition of Nonouti to his island possessions and thereafter declared emphatically, 'Nanouch belong a me'. Within a few months, however, Binoka's ambitions had been trimmed by Lieutenant Moore of HMS *Dart*. On the grounds that the Nonouti trading monopoly interfered with the trade of British subjects Moore forced the protesting chief to cut the fourth star from his flag and to renounce his claim to Nonouti.⁴⁷

Such naval intervention was not unusual. From the early 19th century British authorities had been concerned with lawlessness and violence caused by European penetration into the southwest Pacific. In Fiji in 1874, as in New Zealand in 1840, no action short of annexation could offer a solution, but whenever possible Britain avoided formal colonial commitments and preferred instead to give moral and sometimes military support to island governments, and to use her naval strength to control the worst excesses of one race against another. To this end there had been, from the 1830s, more or less annual naval patrols into the trouble-spots of the Pacific.⁴⁸ From 1859, when the Royal Navy's Australia Station was formally established, naval officers became increasingly important tools in the British Government's attempts to control relations between its nationals and Pacific Islanders. A French presence was established in Tahiti and New Caledonia and, less formally, in the New Hebrides; Germany was similarly placed in Samoa but, elsewhere in the southwest Pacific, the Europeans engaged in planting and trading, or who had chosen the less demanding occupation of beachcombing, were overwhelmingly British. When forced to do so by the actions and interests of its nationals, Britain took direct action, as in Fiji, but even when agitation over the labour trade was at its peak after the death of Bishop Patteson in 1872, the Foreign and Colonial Offices still sought expedients by which the activities of British subjects could be controlled without extending the limits of Her Majesty's possessions.⁴⁹

One such expedient was the passing of the Pacific Islanders Protection Act—designed to remove abuses from the labour trade—in 1872; another was to take advantage of the cession of Fiji to give its Governor additional powers as High Commissioner and Consul-General for the Western Pacific.⁵⁰ Under the Western Pacific Order in Council of 1877, the High Commissioner was given responsibility for British subjects in islands of the Western Pacific which were 'not within the jurisdiction of any civilised power'. Consuls were appointed to Samoa and Tonga but, except for using the resources of the Royal Navy, the High Commissioner lacked the means to make his power effective. In their judicial capacity naval officers thenceforth acted under his authority but there was little discernible change in the reality of naval justice. True, there were fewer arrests for kidnapping, and less need to pursue villains like Bully Hayes and, perhaps, the justice became a little less summary and punitive, but these developments were indicative of changed circumstances rather than of the High Commissioner's influence.

Before the 1870s the occasional incursions by naval vessels of various nationalities had meant very little in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands; later in the century, when men-of-war visited with increased frequency, they were universally regarded with respect, sometimes with fear. Both traders and missionaries were prone to invoke the spectre of a man-of-war in their attempts to bend host communities to

their will and no doubt an impression was made on the popular consciousness by the target practice frequently ordered by commanders. Although these demonstrations were generally intended to entertain rather than to intimidate, their implications must have been clear. On some occasions a definite lesson was intended; at Nanumea in 1872, for example, Moresby fired two guns specifically 'for the benefit of the chief' when a resident Englishman (ironically a deserter from the Navy) claimed that his life had been threatened.⁵¹

Under their general instructions commanders were charged with 'affording countenance and support to peaceful traders among various tribes of savages who are subject to no laws'⁵² but, despite the blatant Eurocentricity of their instructions, most commanders saw little of the officer and gentleman in the traders they encountered and, unless they had been the victims of violence, generally showed little sympathy for their grievances. Complaints were investigated and, when approached, most commanders attempted to arbitrate in disputes, even in matters which fell outside their formal jurisdiction. Disputed land sales were common and usually occurred when the European trader, contrary to custom, wished to secure absolute title to land owned by his Islander wife or when the purchaser's view of tenure differed from that of the seller. Island leaders were also uncomprehending of market fluctuations and frequently tried to control the price of copra and other commodities through their use of an embargo or tabu on trade. This, the favourite disciplinary weapon of island governments, was also applied when marriage, liquor, or Sabbath observance laws were resisted because they interfered with the pleasures or profits of the exasperated traders. Moore, with his pro-trader sympathies, was an exception; most of his colleagues took the view that by choosing to live on a given island European settlers made themselves subject to its laws and customs. Having said this, however, most of them tried to negotiate a compromise or to persuade the island authorities to make allowances for the idiosyncracies of foreigners.⁵³ By contrast, the German navy was much more aggressive in its promotion of the interests of German nationals and on more than one occasion bombarded a village in retribution for a trade boycott. And at Abaiang in 1872 Captain Meade of the USS *Narragansett* fired shells over the heads of invading Tarawa Islanders in order to force their withdrawal.⁵⁴

Such generalised punitive action was discouraged by the British Government and commanders had to be constantly wary of earning Admiralty displeasure by over-stepping an ill-defined line of responsibility. Such intimidatory methods were, nonetheless, occasionally deemed expedient in Melanesia but in Micronesia, where the total vulnerability of atoll populations was immediately obvious, the imperial presence, threats, and an occasional show of force were generally sufficient to secure compliance. In general, however, commanders in Micronesia stopped short of direct action themselves and, by whatever means available to them, preferred to persuade local

authorities to carry out their wishes.

In 1876, for example, Lieutenant Pugh of HMS *Renard* was sent to investigate the murder of ne'er-do-well trader St John Curtis Keyse at Abaiang. Having assured himself that he had identified the murderer, Pugh 'sent to Ten Timau the King and demanded the production and execution of Tagiao the native who committed the deed'. He then sent his sub-lieutenant ashore to determine the range of 'the Council house, War canoes, sheds, Armoury where field pieces were kept, and the dwelling places of the Kings and chiefs' in case further persuasion became necessary. It was not, and once the murderer had been tied across the mouth of a cannon by the chief's retainers, Pugh delivered a lecture on the 'certainty' of British justice, after which the unfortunate Tagiao was blown to pieces.⁵⁵ In another case, at Butaritari in 1884, Arthur Eury was charged by the *Uea* with the murder of Ah Sam, a Chinese trader. The evidence indicated that although Eury may have been an idle drunken fool he was not a murderer and he was, in fact, being framed to protect the real offenders who were cousins of the *Uea*. Having tried and acquitted Eury, Lieutenant Moore of HMS *Dart* punished the Butaritari people for mistreating Eury by seizing their firearms which he dumped in the lagoon, and he found the *Uea* only too willing to follow his suggestion of exiling the real offenders to the neighbouring island of Makin.⁵⁶

Towards the end of the 19th century naval patrols, which had at first been of a peace-keeping and quasi-judicial nature, took on a more imperial character. Advice, often strongly worded, was given to recognised authorities for the better governance of their islands and naval officers began to adopt a more interventionist stance in local politics. Changing attitudes towards the constant warfare on Tarawa are a case in point. In 1881 Captain W.H. Maxwell of HMS *Emerald* walked to within 200 yards of armies keeping up a desultory exchange of rifle fire across a tidal passage but came to the conclusion that 'it was hopeless to propose talking, questioning, or expostulation, so after looking on for a short time we walked back to the boat'.⁵⁷ Five years later Commander E. Rooke of HMS *Miranda* summoned chiefs from both northern and southern camps on board and persuaded them to sign a peace treaty.⁵⁸ Observance of it was shortlived, but it is of interest here that Rooke saw no need to justify his action beyond stating that the war was taking place. Here and elsewhere in the group Rooke 'made some hints to help them frame their laws', suggested the formation of island governments where they did not exist, and insisted that the collection of trading fees carried a guarantee of protection and fair trading opportunities.

In effect, the commanders assumed a supervisory role with respect to the island governments; nor is it surprising that they did so because by this time the islands were regarded as a British responsibility. This had been recognised in 1886 when, in response to Australasian concern at the expansion of foreign interests in New Guinea, Britain and Germany had signed a declaration which established their

respective spheres of interest over the 'unclaimed' islands of the western Pacific. The line of demarcation divided what later became Papua from German New Guinea, and proceeded eastwards to the north of the Solomons and Gilberts, and south of the Marshalls and Nauru; the British sphere lay to the south of this line.⁵⁹ Germany was immediately active in extending its control over the northern sphere and demonstrated that it had by no means lost interest in the Gilberts by sending four naval patrols to the group between 1888 and 1892.⁶⁰

Ironically, the agreement had come at a time when British interests in the central Pacific were in decline. The New Zealand firm of Henderson and Macfarlane monopolised trade in the Ellice and, like On Chong & Co of Sydney, still had substantial interests in the Gilberts. By the late 1880s however both were steadily losing ground to the Jaluit Gesellschaft, which had inherited Godeffroy's interests, and the Californian firms of Wightman Brothers and Crawford & Co. It was in response to this American incursion that German traders in the Gilberts petitioned their home government to annex the group in 1888, but their request was refused under the terms of the 1886 agreement. The American traders further disturbed the *status quo* on Butaritari, the principal port and trading centre, when they introduced the 'clip' system, a refinement of the usury business of Maka, the Hawaiian missionary, under which credit was issued in return for the right to gather all produce from a specified coconut grove until a debt was paid. As the interest rates were exorbitant and most landowners did not keep a check on the nuts collected by the traders, they paid dearly for their pleasures. The scheme was so popular, however, that all trading firms were forced to allow credit on crops several years ahead or lose their share of the market.⁶¹ German interests were also disturbed when American recruiters began signing on hundreds of labourers for Guatemalan coffee plantations in the early 1890s and thus threatened their future use of the Gilbertese labour pool. The cumulative effort of these developments was a German expression of concern, a concern that was intensified when it became known that American traders had arranged for Bureimoa, the Uea of Butaritari, to go to the United States where he had sought American protection for the Gilberts. The consequent rumours to the effect that the United States, which had not been a signatory to the 1886 agreement, was about to agree to this request led to strong German pressure on the British Foreign Office throughout 1891.⁶²

The British Government was still reluctant to act. When Sir John Thurston, the High Commissioner, had become suspicious of German intentions after the petition of 1888 and subsequent naval activity in the area, the Colonial Office vetoed his proposals for modest expenditure on a Deputy Commissioner to be based in the Solomons but with responsibility also for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.⁶³ In 1891 when Germany sought to protect its labour supplies and to restrict the expansion of American influence generally, there was little enthusiasm in the British response. This was not simply

because of an innate reluctance to extend the Empire nor, indeed, because the islands were considered to be economically and strategically insignificant but because of a parsimonious concern that any new administration might not be able to generate sufficient revenue to cover its costs. The Colonial Office eventually conceded the necessity of some action, partly because it was obvious that there was no other way of preserving the spirit of the 1886 agreement and partly because the Foreign Office was anxious to have German support in meeting French hostility to the continued British presence in Egypt. The decision was also made in anticipation of an anguished response from the Australasian colonies should pre-emptive action be taken by either Germany or the United States. In its caution the Cabinet rejected the idea of annexation, because of its implied permanence and cost, and permitted only the declaration of a protectorate in which island governments would be left to handle their own affairs under the occasional supervision of a British Resident. The hope was even expressed that this step might only be temporarily required and that later withdrawal might be possible.⁶⁴

It was thus with reluctance, and only because of wider international obligations, that Britain was persuaded to extend its protection to the Gilbert Islands. On 27 May 1892 Captain E.H.M. Davis, commanding HMS *Royalist*, raised the Union Jack at Abemama, fired a 21-gun salute, and issued an immediate warning to European traders that the sale of firearms, ammunition and liquor was henceforth forbidden. Because there was no centralised government in the Gilberts, Davis then proceeded to repeat the flag-raising ceremony on all islands of the group save Makin, Aranuka and Kuria which were under the domination of other islands.⁶⁵

On Butaritari, Davis's action was greeted with dismay by some traders, especially those employed by American firms. Their unofficial leader was Adolph Rick, who had previously worked for Wightman Brothers and was, at the time of Davis's visit, agent for Crawford & Co. He had been a leading beneficiary of the 'clip' system and, through his wife, the only European woman on Butaritari, had considerable influence over the *Uea*. In 1888 he had sought and obtained the status of United States Commercial Agent at the court of King Bureimoa of Butaritari. He was not credited to the British Government and Davis, by refusing to recognise him, added insult to the already mortal injury he had inflicted on Rick's plans. It was his firm that had persuaded Bureimoa to visit San Francisco—where his credit was not good enough to buy a trading schooner—and, while he was there, to seek United States protection for the whole Gilbert group.⁶⁶ According to the Rick version of the story—unsupported, it might be noted, by any apart from his friends—the 'American residents were furious but helpless' and the 'King of Butaritari protested against the British flag being hoisted over his Island and told the Captain that he had send [*sic*] a petition to Washington USA offering his Island to the United States as a Coaling Station.'⁶⁷

Although the United States Government had only recently dissociated itself from any plans for colonial expansion in the Pacific and was not, at this stage, even prepared to accede to the entreaties of American interests in Hawaii, American diplomatic representatives in London now took up Rick's battle with vigour. It was claimed that 'the germs of civilization were planted in the Gilbert group by the zealous endeavours of American citizens' and that their efforts had changed 'the naked barbarism of the island natives into enlightened communities.' On the basis of this rather extravagant assessment which over-estimated the impact of the American Board and overlooked the type of commercial education sponsored by Rick and his friends, the United States representatives asserted that their government had 'slept upon its rights to reap the benefits of the development produced by the efforts of its citizens.'⁶⁸ For Rick, the final humiliation was to discover that just before the protectorate was declared, the American Government had indicated the level of its interest in the Gilberts by sending him instructions to close his Commercial Agency.⁶⁹

This diplomatic posturing was still in the future, however, as Davis, having proclaimed the Protectorate, proceeded to investigate the usual claims, charges and complaints brought before visiting naval commanders. In some matters he acted as his predecessors might have done, as when he enforced the payment of fines levied on earlier visits, fined British traders for selling arms and liquor, and when, as Rooke had done six years before, he summoned the chiefs of Tarawa and secured their agreement to a peace treaty. But, in anticipation of a more active jurisdiction, he also persuaded them to agree, contrary to custom, that one of their number was the 'rightful king', and then personally led his men in assisting this dignitary to collect firearms and to enforce the penalty of a £10 fine or hard labour for those who withheld arms, and deported two trouble-makers to the Ellice Islands. On most of the islands he visited, Davis collected all available weapons, gave advice on laws and good government, and warned traders and missionaries from becoming involved in politics. Having found an eye-witness to the murder of Ah Sam on Butaritari some eight years before, he collected witnesses and depositions on Tarawa where the accused man was then living and himself led the prosecution before the new 'king' and his council. The man was convicted and then shot in Davis's presence. He ordered Kapu, the former missionary, to leave the group because of his anti-Catholicism and his involvement in the Tabiteuean war a decade earlier, and he issued similar instructions to Carl Jorgenson, a Danish trader, charged with raping an eight-year-old girl. Davis was scrupulous in the performance of his duties and in part the different character of his patrol reflects his thoroughness as well as a more active imperial policy. But he brought the Union Jack to stay, fired his 21-gun salutes, and stayed in the group long enough to visit most islands two or three times. He left little doubt that a new era had arrived.⁷⁰

By his very actions, however, Davis highlighted the difficulties that would face any future administrator obliged to work within the framework laid down by the Colonial Office. Knutsford, the Secretary of State, had specified that the Resident should appear to be an active agent only as the 'delegate and representative of native authority'.⁷¹ Thurston, closer to the realities of the situation, had doubts as to the effectiveness of any authority so tenuously based: 'any unscrupulous foreigner might easily persuade them that an appointment made by them might also be by them revoked'. Thurston urged annexation as a more satisfactory basis for the Resident's authority.⁷²

The Colonial Office was not to be moved, but having gone so far as to establish the Gilbert Islands Protectorate it was prepared to listen to Thurston's case for including the Ellice Islands within the Resident's jurisdiction; earlier, he had suggested that the group might be jointly administered with Rotuma. Thurston stressed the possible strategic significance of the easily navigable lagoons of Funafuti and Nukufetau, and the domination of trade by British interests. Ultimately, however, it was the same argument that had applied in the Gilberts that was decisive—it would be inexpedient to allow any foreign power to establish a presence within the British sphere of influence.⁷³ On his return voyage from the Gilberts to Suva, Davis had called at each of the Ellice Islands and found that their rulers would welcome British protection. A proclamation to this effect was issued at Vaitupu, on 10 September 1892, by Captain H.W.S. Gibson, commanding HMS *Curaçoa*.⁷⁴

Despite the wealth of detailed information about conditions in the Gilbert and Ellice groups brought back by Davis, Thurston was not prepared to finalise his plans for their administration until he had had an opportunity to assess the situation at first hand. Nor was he able to proceed until the Colonial Office and Treasury had, after a protracted correspondence, agreed on the overall nature and cost of administration for the protectorates. Finally, Thurston was allowed to appoint a Resident, at a salary of £500 a year, so long as the salary and all incidental expenses could be covered from local revenue. The Resident was not to be given either subordinate staff or transport of his own; for the latter he was to depend on trading vessels supplemented by occasional charters and naval patrols. Because the islands had only protectorate status, and under the Western Pacific Order in Council a Deputy Commissioner's powers normally extended only to British subjects, Thurston was empowered to negotiate treaties under which the island governments would give the Resident jurisdiction over all Europeans living in the groups.⁷⁵

Thus armed, Thurston sailed in June 1893 for the islands he had last seen thirty years before when he was first mate on the *James*, an island trader.⁷⁶ In the interim the islands had been transformed, at least superficially, and Thurston was not much impressed with the change. He was prepared to concede that 'even a little culture and civilization

had in the children before us softened down the old look of savagery I so well remember and which still lingers in all middle aged and old people' but he was generally scornful of the trappings of European civilisation that so many Gilbertese, and particularly their leaders, had adopted.⁷⁷ Young Paul, successor to Binoka's throne on Abemama, 'seemed a nice little boy anxious to get out of his chair and his clothes',⁷⁸ and he could not resist comparing the 'king' of Butaritari in his 'black frock coat, helmet hat, [and] patent leather shoes' with his predecessors 'who in clean and softly plaited mats with a garland of flowers around their heads were also friendly, but free from debt and perfectly happy'.⁷⁹ It was this trader-induced mimicry of European ways that was most upsetting to Thurston and Butaritari, the main European settlement, that attracted his most scathing criticism. It was, he thought, a prime example of the 'rotten pestilential civilization of the traders' changing from 'old time savage cleanliness to modern mongrel civilization and dirt'. It was, in short, a 'miserable, pitiable monkey-like state'.⁸⁰ These views, confided for the most part to a private journal, seem to reflect the anger of the romantic at finding the reality of the Gilberts so far removed from his memories of the early 1860s. And his views were coloured by his reactions to the 'miserable white men' who accounted for most of the foreign settlers and to the chiefs who seemed to lack the presence, power and stature that he so admired in the leaders of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

Although he mocked external appearances Thurston did not, and could not in the time, probe the real nature and causes of the change that had taken place over the preceding thirty years. In that time the whalers, who had been active long before his first trip, had continued to visit the group; the coconut oil trade had expanded, developed into the copra trade and brought social, economic and technological change to every household; perhaps one-tenth of the population had returned from travels beyond the archipelago that, with a few exceptions, had represented the ultimate limits of their ancestors' world for hundreds of years; for many, new experiences and revised perceptions had led to the acceptance of a new cosmology. Each of these developments was a potent force for change but their effects had not been spread evenly through the group. For example, neither the American Board nor the Sacred Heart Mission had wrought great changes by this time but in the southern Gilberts and in the Ellice Islands the populations were predominantly Christian, at least nominally; village organisation had been modified; laws had been framed in conformity with Christian precepts. On these islands the role of the traders had been to help meet the material needs of the new lifestyle. Sour toddy drinking and violence, domestic or political, were rare. On the islands north of the Line the traders had found greater resources and, generally speaking, a lower level of community control. Despite occasional bans there was a ready market for liquor and on most islands constant warfare generated a steady market for firearms. Despite the unevenness of contact with these various agents

of change in the second half of the 19th century, there were common trends.

For example, there had been a significantly increased centralisation of political power. The chiefs of Butaritari-Makin and Abemama-Kuria-Aranuka had used their paramountcy to capitalise on the contact with Europeans to consolidate and extend their power. They bought weapons as well as luxuries and were careful to control the distribution of benefits in such a way as to preserve the dependence of others upon them. The *Uea* of Abemama monopolised trade whereas his counterpart on Butaritari allowed his subjects to trade but then levied taxes on traders and Islanders alike. Their domains were composed of the most productive islands in the group and because of this labour migration was less attractive to their people. And for such chiefs there was little attraction in Christianity; their power and legitimacy were established by custom and confirmed by practice; there was no new political order lacking a related spiritual base. The *Uea* of Butaritari did attend church from time to time when he was sober, but he showed little inclination to impose Christianity on his subjects. Binoka finally allowed missionaries to land in 1873 but thereafter did little to help and much to hinder their work. The European traders, who thus remained the beneficiaries of chiefly spending power, promoted chiefs to kingly status and addressed them with studied humility as 'Your Majesty'.

The other islands north of the Line were pale imitations of these 'kingdoms'. By the time Davis visited the group or, rather, by the time he left it, all of these islands professed to have paramount chiefs who ruled with the advice of councils and naval commanders but who, in reality, had little more than temporary, sometimes externally imposed, supremacy over their rivals. Laws, when enforced, were applied capriciously and for factional advantage. Some demanded licence fees from traders but were unable to guarantee personal protection or peaceful trading conditions in return. Tarawa was the least stable politically but Marakei, Abaiang and Maiana all suffered periodically from warfare over disputed succession within chiefly districts, or pre-eminence among them. It was Europeans who saw these islands as petty kingdoms and tried to fit the reality to the ideal; the colonial government attempted to preserve them in this artificial state only to find that those confirmed as chiefs were regarded as usurpers by their subjects.

Nonouti and Tabiteuea, the largest and most populous islands in the Gilberts, were the least changed in the 19th century. Each was divided into several competing *maneaba* districts in which councils of old men arbitrated in disputes and governed in matters of general concern but were unable to exercise direct control over the behaviour of individuals. Sour toddy drinking was a popular pastime and the inhabitants of both islands had earned a reputation for their violence towards one another and their hostility towards foreigners. Missionaries had enjoyed only modest and usually passing success;

traders were few in number and made small profits. Except for the campaigns of Kapu on Tabiteuea in the early 1880s, neither island had seen any significant change in the traditional political order.

In the far south, the LMS pastors had encouraged the growth of centralised councils which encompassed several former *maneaba* districts, and those elected to the government—in reality, those nominated by the pastor—were, at least in part, dependent on the church for their status. But such were the pressures to conform—a trait of the old society as well as the new—that within a few years many of the new offices were filled by traditional leaders.

Similar developments took place in the Ellice Islands. The traditional chiefs were superseded by the pastors at the apex of the power pyramid but most retained positions of influence within their communities, although the pastors, with their deacons and councillors, now represented more arbitrary authority than was formerly the case with the chiefs. In the Ellice Islands there was also a greater enthusiasm for the new way which embodied both Christianity and *Fa'a Samoa* than was ever exhibited in the Gilberts. Part of the explanation is to be found in the customary ties that linked the Ellice Islands with Samoa, but it was also significant that the communities were smaller, hierarchically structured, and that the missionaries had less competition from the secular influences carried by traders and returned labourers. Even at this stage with the church, as later with the colonial government, the Ellice Islanders were more willing than the Gilbertese to modify the old and accept the new where individual or communal benefit could be perceived.

In some matters the Gilbertese leaders adopted the values of the church, the new economic order, or colonial rule, but often only when these were seen as the means of controlling or modifying the impact of external influences; generally, they held to old values with the conservatism that has always characterised Gilbertese society. Within their families the *unimane*, the old men, were paramount; they retained control over the land; they resisted the aspirations and desire for change exhibited by their mission-educated children and by returned labourers; they gave up the public worship of their traditional gods, girded their loins with immaculate lava-lavas and, in times of crisis, turned again to ancestral deities. They conceded change of a nature and degree that would give some advantage from the new order or, at least, minimise its disadvantages and penalties, but they seldom did so with enthusiasm. Any who went beyond the admitted limits of change were ridiculed for trying to ape European ways. The Gilbertese were gradually persuaded to render unto God and, later, to Caesar but they always retained the essence of their culture for themselves; they had that type of pride in the past, and identity with it, that led them to preserve custom because it was custom; the Ellice Islanders were more inclined to seize the immediate benefits of the new ways and make the necessary cultural adjustments. In later years the Ellice Islanders were to mock the conservatism and

'backwardness' of the Gilbertese; in turn they were to be scorned as a people who had given away their culture.

Thus the peoples of two very different cultures (which were not in themselves homogeneous) were brought together under British colonial rule. That rule was generally benign and well-meaning but the realities of cultural diversity were sometimes ignored, or deemed irrelevant to the priorities of colonial administration. Gradually, but inevitably, the policies of Britain, the power that had brought the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders together, helped to drive them apart. The unity that had been imposed could not survive three-quarters of a century of colonial rule.

CHAPTER FIVE

Pax Britannica: the beginnings of colonial rule, 1892-1908

As a matter of policy, the first colonial institutions in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were closely modelled on traditional forms. But within a decade of Thurston's visit, his basic principle of minimal interference in island affairs had been lost. Behind a façade of guidance and indirect rule an administrative system had been created that was authoritarian to a degree unusual for British dependencies in the Pacific Islands or elsewhere. In their attempts to establish 'effective' island governments, officials by-passed traditional leaders and challenged, but could never completely overcome, the influence of Christian missions on the secular aspects of village life. The Gilbert and Ellice Islands, which had entered the colonial era with separate protectorate status, soon came to be regarded as a single dependency. Additionally, for administrative convenience, their future was linked to that of Ocean Island which, since the beginning of phosphate mining in 1900, had been brought under the jurisdiction of the Resident Commissioner. Ocean Island became the destination for a new generation of labour migrants from the Gilbert and Ellice groups, and a major source of revenue for the Government, but for officials it generated problems of ever-increasing magnitude. In 1908, Ocean Island became the site of administrative headquarters for the Protectorate; as a consequence, the Gilbert and Ellice groups became and, until the Second World War remained, a neglected backwater of the Empire. From that time until phosphate mining ended in 1979, the British Government saw the colony's problems in terms of Ocean Island phosphates and allowed the industry a major say in their attempted resolution.

The news that Britain had extended its protection to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands encouraged all manner of men to approach the High Commissioner for employment. There were applications from Fiji planters who had fallen on hard times in the depression of the 1880s, from struggling businessmen, and from men who had already found themselves minor government positions in the Pacific dependencies. Also among the applicants were Patrick Hird, trading manager on the SS *Archer* which plied from Auckland to the Central Pacific via Fiji; and Louis Becke, who by this time was well known as a supercargo and trader in the western Pacific but had still to establish his reputation as a writer.¹ Thurston's first choice for Resident was George Peate, a planter with long experience of employing Gilbertese labour in Fiji. However after his trip to the groups in 1893 Thurston

was convinced that he must appoint someone with magisterial and administrative experience who could supervise the new island governments and solve the problems caused by heavy indebtedness at Butaritari and the other northern islands of the Gilbert group. The man he chose was Charles Swayne, his personal friend from the days of the Cakobau Government, who had been employed as a Stipendiary Magistrate in Lau since 1878.² Swayne, like Thurston, was a firm believer in the capacity of indigenous institutions and, although moved to direct intervention on occasions, he was more inclined to advise than instruct, and to leave with island governments the substance as well as the semblance of power.

On reaching the Gilberts in December 1893, Swayne's first task was to investigate the debts owed to trading firms by the people of Butaritari and Makin. He found that most of the debts, alleged by traders to amount to some £6500, had been contracted under the 'clip' system—the mortgage of the produce of specified pieces of land in return for credit. The origin of the term is unclear—although, as Thurston suggested, the annual harvest or interest might be likened to a wool clip—but it was agreed that the Reverend Maka and his Hawaiian trading associates had introduced the system which, in the 1880s, had been refined by Adolph Rick of Wightman Brothers to give a profit of several hundred per cent. Any trader who wished to make a living, honest or otherwise, was obliged to adopt credit sales. Credit had been allowed for store purchases and cash had also been advanced to pay the high chief's fines on behalf of people whose lands would otherwise be forfeit. The situation had been further exacerbated by the Islanders' habit of trading clips among themselves and by a general failure to keep reliable records. After a series of public inquiries, in which the Gilbertese volunteered information that allowed their debts to be established, Swayne found proven debts of £3800 at Butaritari, and £1000 at Makin. Subsequent investigations revealed more orthodox trading debts of £1300 at Tarawa, £1000 at Maiana and £800 at Abaiang. On all islands Swayne suggested that the newly formed island governments accept responsibility for the payment of debts and place a general tabu on trade in coconuts for any other purpose until the debts were paid—a scheme which helped to establish the status of the new governments and, at the same time, drove back into the traders' pockets the debased South American coinage which they had introduced at a large profit.³

These island governments were simply organised, structured as far as possible in accordance with customary political systems, and allowed to function with as little outside interference as possible. Thurston had recommended this administrative model partly because, on the basis of the Fiji experience, he thought it in the best interests of the Islanders, and partly because the Colonial Office would not agree to annexation and the level of administration that it implied, and he was left with little alternative. The main requirement, Thurston believed, was for island authorities to surrender any control over

foreigners and then to govern, with full police and magisterial powers, 'under the guidance of a European Officer or two'.⁴

It was obvious that the organisation of the island governments would need to be formalised in some degree, and equally obvious that no single structure would be applicable to all islands. In an attempt to secure some degree of uniformity, Swayne recognised the hierarchical principles inherent in the social organisation of the northern Gilberts and in the Ellice Islands and here a High Chief was made responsible for the 'good order of the islands'. The hegemony of the High Chiefs of Abemama and Butaritari over Kuria and Aranuka, and Makin respectively was also recognised. On the Gilbert Islands from Nonouti southwards the Kaubure, or councillors—meaning the leading elders—were collectively given this responsibility. On all islands there was to be a Magistrate, who might act with a jury of Kaubure; only in the event of a conviction for murder was reference to the Resident mandatory. The authorities on each island were also to appoint policemen and a Scribe who was to be responsible for the Island Fund into which all taxes and fines were to be paid.⁵

After collecting the laws—including those enforced by both custom and the missions—Swayne devised a common code for all islands of both groups. He found variation in detail rather than in principle among the various islands, and a common view on the seriousness of the prescribed offences. Murder was punishable by death; theft, assault, adultery, rape, fornication (defined as sexual intercourse with a woman betrothed to another man), drunkenness, damage to property and more minor offences by terms of imprisonment not exceeding two years, by fines not exceeding £5 and, for some second offences, by up to ten lashes. Sabbath observance and school attendance were to be enforced. The principle of compensation, fundamental to customary law, was recognised although limited to the value of articles stolen, to £10 in cases of fornication, and £20 in cases of adultery. The island governments were also empowered to make local regulations for the 'good order and cleanliness' of their islands with punishments for non-observance not to exceed a fine of 10s or imprisonment for one month.⁶

Although there were relatively few innovations that represented the imposition of the legal priorities of the imperial power, Swayne's constitution and code did introduce fundamental changes into the principles and practice of government and law. In the Gilbert Islands, for example, only Butaritari and Abemama and their respective satellites could be considered to be under the unquestioned dominance of a paramount chief. But Davis had recognised 'kings' on all the northern Gilbert Islands (and by so doing he had frozen a normally fluid situation in respect of both individual land holdings and the balance of power between districts). This was continued by Swayne although on Marakei, Tarawa and Maiana the person confirmed as High Chief had claim to no more than the leadership of a single district or faction. On Tarawa he soon found that Tem Matang, the High

Chief elected on the *Royalist*, was a mere cipher and real power was held by Ten Tekanaiti, the Magistrate, who had been the moral victor in the war ended by Davis in May 1892. And at Marakei old rivalries flared into open warfare when Ten Tatun, the High Chief, ruled solely for factional advantage. Swayne, acting under the Order in Council of 1893, promptly deported him to Fiji for two years and dismissed his henchmen among the Kaubure—an exercise partly intended as a punishment and partly as an object-lesson to the governments of Marakei, Abaiang and Tarawa.⁷ On all these islands the powers inherent in the office of the High Chief steadily declined and were assumed by the Magistrates. And in the Ellice Islands, the freedom of the community to change its leaders was no longer countenanced by the Government. Here, as in the northern Gilberts, the flexibility of the traditional system had been removed.

Although it was not obvious in Swayne's time, the appointment of Magistrates was the structural change that was to have the greatest long-term effect. Even though there had formerly been, under the district *maneaba* governments, one man who was recognised as the *tia motiki-taeka* (giver of the deciding word), his role had been to announce a consensus rather than to make a decision; and there was no perception under traditional law of any division into legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.⁸ As the Magistrate was the one responsible for administering the law he was soon recognised, by officials and Islanders alike, as the head of the island government. He was also seen as the agent of the central government; as the one who acted in its name, learned to invoke its power, and was responsible to it rather than to the local community. Thus the emergence of the Magistrate as the dominant figure in island government was made inevitable by a combination of local perceptions and imperial policy. As a further development, the Chief of Kaubure emerged to become the executive agent of the Magistrate. There was no provision for such an office in the constitution beyond the requirement that the Kaubure should elect one from among their number to chair their monthly meetings. In practice, however, Swayne regularised the position and intended that in the southern Gilberts the Chief of Kaubure should assume the leadership functions equivalent to those of a High Chief.

In the southern Gilberts there were other complications as well. Although primary responsibility was vested in a council of elders, Swayne still perceived a need for a Magistrate and a Chief of Kaubure to head the government. In former times, however, any individual who assumed a position of leadership had been quickly killed or exiled and hence Swayne had great difficulty in persuading anyone to accept office. There was less difficulty with the Magistrate who, from the outset, was regarded as a government servant, but the concept of a dominant figure within a council of elders was both alien and repugnant. An uneasy compromise was reached whereby Chiefs of Kaubure were elected for a two-year term but in the early years those

chosen were seldom active and hence allowed, by default, a further expansion of the Magistrates' powers. Another difficulty lay in the traditional division of each island into a number of districts each jealous of its independence. To preserve traditional balances the old men of all districts assumed office as Kaubure, resulting in meetings attended by 200 or more in an integrated *maneaba* council. Although such councils had previously met only rarely on the larger islands, they nonetheless had sound precedent and could operate within well-defined modes of procedure. While satisfying the pride of all concerned, they made for ineffectual government. It was a measure of Swayne's diplomacy that he managed to secure the reduction of all to manageable proportions while preserving their representative character.⁹

New legal concepts were also introduced. In former times, crimes had been seen as offences against the person or, in a few cases, against the community at large. It was on this basis that punishments had fallen on the person of the offender in the form of death or exile, or on his property which was given to his victim as compensation. In the changing circumstances of the 19th century, however, the severity of many punishments had been modified, and fines—an alternative method of seizing property—imposed and divided among the chiefs, councillors, pastors and deacons with, in most cases, a portion also going to those who had suffered by the offence. The idea of material benefit for a thief's conviction accruing to any other than the person whose goods had been stolen did represent a change. However it was still some distance removed from the concept of an impersonal government imposing punishments, especially imprisonment, which resulted in the performance of public works or the accumulation of public funds but did not directly compensate the victim of an offence. The principle of compensation was preserved in the form of cash payments for some offences but this in no way carried the same weight as the seizure of land or the enslavement of a thief and his family, punishments which were seen as a substitute for the life of the offender.

Because of Swayne's preoccupation with the Butaritari debts, and the difficulties of transport—he was dependent on the infrequent visits of trading vessels—the impact of colonial rule in the early years was more evident in the written law than in its practice. The island governments took time to learn their powers and responsibilities as these were perceived by the Resident; the constitution and laws were available in Gilbertese and, for the Ellice Islands, in Samoan, but such translations made little difference without the interpretations and explanations of the Resident and the sanction of his presence.

Swayne spent most of his two years in the Protectorate teaching the island governments their duties; he was firm in his insistence that the law must become the 'supreme arbiter of all disputes' but patient in achieving this on islands where a unified government was expected to supersede the 'smothered hostility' of district rivalries. Officials who

acted in a dishonest or partial manner, or who clearly lacked legitimacy in the eyes of those they governed, were dismissed but their successors were elected rather than appointed. The deportation of the High Chief of Marakei was made the occasion of confiscating all firearms on the island but at Beru, where district rivalries were still prominent and the people reluctant to surrender their arms 'as they wanted them to keep off thieves', Swayne was satisfied by a gradual accumulation of firearms into the *maneaba* of each district. On Swayne's instructions house designs were modified in the interests of village hygiene, villages were laid out in a more orderly fashion and joined by public roads, cemeteries were established for each village and the burial of the dead in or near houses banned; and at Nonouti he directed that all unwanted dogs should be killed and eaten. At Maiana, when a man was found guilty of murder, Swayne upheld the conviction and directed the High Chief to have the prisoner shot at noon but, in deference to custom, when a Tabiteuean freely admitted killing his father in a fight because the latter's excessive demands under the *tinaba* relationship were unsanctioned by custom, he commuted the sentence to two years' imprisonment. Similarly, at Marakei, he declined to act on the entreaties of a young girl destined, under custom, to become the concubine of her elder sister's husband.¹⁰

There were fewer problems in the Ellice Islands where strong centralised governments had already been established under the influence of the LMS. So orderly were they, in fact, that Swayne thought it necessary to visit the group only once a year and he seemed little concerned at the dominance exercised by the pastors; at Niutao, for example, he found that Talamoni, the LMS pastor, virtually governed the island, but made no attempt to interfere.¹¹ In general, however, official recognition did help to slow the decline in the status of traditional leaders but in many cases the island government was little more than an agency through which the pastor and his deacons ruled supreme. After a visit to Funafuti Swayne reported:

The Native Law was introduced and is now in force. The Tupu and his councillors understand their position and show an intelligent interest in the government of their island.¹²

The exact nature of the High Chief's position was clear to Mrs Edgeworth David who lived on the island for several months in 1897:

I tried hard to see the advantage of being a king in Funafuti, but couldn't. The king's hut was not so good as the native pastor's, his clothes were no better than those of his subjects; and his food was the same—cocoa-nut, fish and taro. He had only one voice in the making of laws on the island, and seemed to look up to the Samoan pastor as an authority in things temporal as well as spiritual ... Since the island has been under British protection the king is a nominal king only, an ornamental, but not very expensive, head to a nice little republic.¹³

Chiefly power, circumscribed in former times, had been steadily eroded for a quarter of a century before Swayne attempted to revitalise the office of High Chief. The inroads already being made by the pastors were now given greater force by the powers vested in the Magistrates who were mostly pastor nominees. And it was many years before the taxes paid to the new central government reached the levels of pastor salaries or the contributions made to the LMS during the annual visits of the *John Williams*.

Most of the initial costs of administration had to be met from imperial funds because of the time taken to establish tax-collecting procedures and because a severe drought in the southern Gilberts made survival difficult and the payment of taxes an impossibility. The drought broke in the latter part of 1894 and from 1895 administration was financed from fees, fines and levies collected by the island governments. From these funds the governments paid their own officials and expenses, contributed to a 'Queen's Tax'—which ranged from £5 to £25 in the Ellice group and from £5 to £100 in the Gilberts—to cover the Resident's salary and expenses and in most cases were left with a sizeable surplus. In accordance with official views on the autonomy of the island governments these surpluses, although in the custody of the central government, did not belong to it. Because of the difficulties of transport, Swayne used the supercargo of the SS *Archer* as his tax collector in the Ellice and southern Gilbert Islands.¹⁴

The Christian missions also demanded Swayne's attention. So long as mission influence was directed towards the achievement of peace, public order and stable government and, as in the Ellice Islands, drew no complaint from those living under its guidance, Swayne was prepared to recognise the difficulties of changing the situation and accepted it. But in the northern islands he found that the American Board ran its schools in a 'desultory inefficient' way and that this, together with the fees it charged, generated discontent among the Islanders—a discontent which encouraged the Sacred Heart Mission to try to win adherents with free schools, gifts of tobacco, and a general 'liberality to the Natives'. Confrontations between the missions increased in frequency in the early 1890s. For example, on Abaiang there were protests when, untroubled by a lack of followers, Father Maria Gressin began preaching in the village *maneaba* at Koinawa near Bingham's old mission station and on Maiana when he celebrated feast days by letting off fire-crackers during Protestant services. And, Swayne believed, it was the 'aggressive and meddling policy' of Father Richard Van de Wouwer on Tabiteuea that had provoked an irate Protestant, later caught and punished, into burning down the Catholic church; he dismissed Father Joseph Leray's complaint when a Catholic, who had burned down a Protestant church on Nonouti, was flogged and imprisoned for six months. The disputes were by no means one-sided: Catholics had earlier been persecuted at Nikunau; on Beru they were fined for fishing before or

during Protestant services on Wednesdays and Fridays, or when they failed to secure the Protestant pastor's blessing for their marriages. Leray also complained that he had himself been assaulted by the Samoan pastor at Onotoa. Such incidents were but the opening shots in a bitter conflict between Catholic and Protestant which was to have far-reaching effects on government policies and on Gilbertese village life. But this open hostility, like that between government and missions over the control of secular affairs, was in the future; Swayne found that while taking note of the broader issues he could still deal with mission rivalries and grievances on a specific and localised basis.¹⁵

Swayne's essential task was to give substance to British rule in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. Given the scarcity of resources, and the difficulty of transport—factors which were to continue to mould the shape of the Protectorate's administration for many years—he achieved quite remarkable results in establishing principles of administration which were to remain throughout the colonial period. What he could not foresee was that the structure which he and Thurston had devised to give as much autonomy as practicable to the island governments could be manipulated by a determined Resident to give quite minute control over the daily lives of the Islanders. Swayne accepted the necessity of intervention but saw this as a means of education, of showing the island governments their powers and responsibilities, and of securing their legitimacy in the eyes of those they governed.

It was also important, in the presence of American and German traders, and French priests, to show that the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were British. The Islanders, without being deliberately misled by Swayne and other officials, soon came to see themselves as under the personal and benign protection of Queen Victoria herself. The Queen's (later King's) Tax became an institution of island government and was willingly paid as a symbol of loyalty. The scale of atoll society was also important in establishing an acceptance of colonial rule and of the connection with Britain. With Davis's lengthy visit and involvement in local politics in 1892, followed by Thurston's tour of 1893, and Swayne's presence in 1894-5, the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders had a first-hand knowledge and understanding of the chain of command stretching from their chiefs and councils, through the Resident and the High Commissioner to the 'Queen's Government' in Britain, and of the supporting role played by the Royal Navy. Symbols of British rule—especially the Union Jack and royal portraits—were prominently displayed and, once it had been introduced on 24 May 1894, the custom of celebrating the monarch's birthday—'A regatta in the morning with sports in the afternoon and fireworks in the evening'—was enthusiastically adopted.¹⁶ The Gilbert and Ellice Islands had joined the outposts of Empire.

Swayne laid the foundations for colonial rule; his successor, William

Telfer Campbell, constructed upon them an edifice of control that remained virtually untouched until the 1930s. Campbell was an Ulsterman of imposing stature and irascible temper. From 1890 he had been a Resident Magistrate in the Louisiade Archipelago of British New Guinea where his policy of punishing transgressors by cutting down coconut trees and burning houses aroused the ire of the Administrator, Sir William MacGregor. After resigning to seek medical treatment in England in 1891, and finding no vacancy in New Guinea when he returned, Campbell applied, unsuccessfully, for a 'Deputy Commissioner or any other appointment' in the Western Pacific. Despite his earlier criticism, and the reservations expressed in a private diary, MacGregor recommended Campbell as being 'of temperate habits, intelligent, industrious and trustworthy'. In December 1893 Campbell was again employed in New Guinea, although in the less responsible position of Gaoler and Overseer of Works, but he resigned two years later on being offered the Residency of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.¹⁷ By temperament Campbell was an autocrat who soon evinced a determination to use the island governments established by Swayne to inculcate the values and behaviour which he deemed appropriate for colonial peoples. He was impatient with any whose ideas were not in accordance with his own, and intolerant of those who dared challenge his dominance over island society. At various times Campbell became embroiled in conflict with the mission societies, traders, his staff, and his superiors; after twelve stormy years, cleared but not unscarred by two official inquiries into his administration, he was transferred to Tonga.

On Tarawa, which had been made Protectorate headquarters by Swayne, and on the other islands he visited, Campbell soon found that the constitution and law code were scarcely understood and that few of the new officials had any clear idea as to their duties and responsibilities. The Kaubure were often dominated by pastors, served as Magistrates or police, or both, and imposed fines to be shared among themselves; one even fined his wife £12 for dreaming of another man. Campbell, much less patient than Swayne, soon gave up any pretence of advice and began to intervene directly in island affairs. At Onotoa, where the fines had been shared among the numerous Kaubure, Campbell reduced their numbers from 130 to 13 and fined the previous Kaubure 4s each as the nucleus of an Island Fund. At Maiana, a rival of the High Chief who had seized office as Magistrate ruled only for the benefit of his supporters, and accepted feasts in lieu of fines, was removed to the new gaol at Tarawa to serve a sentence imposed by Campbell. There, he was soon joined by a drunken Kaubure from Abemama and an adulterer from Vaitupu. In the Ellice Islands, the Nanumanga Magistrate was dismissed and fined for failing to attend a meeting called by Campbell and, when he found that the people of Niutao and Vaitupu were making a habit of dismissing officials who showed any signs of zeal, Campbell decreed that governments could be changed only with his approval. In other

ways, too, Campbell made clear that his authority transcended the written law. He insisted that drunkards be flogged as 'an example' and at Tarawa he instructed the Magistrate to divide the men of one village into two groups to take turns at constructing the Betio wharf until the circumstances surrounding a murder were discovered. To ensure compliance with his instructions he established a Protectorate police force, based at Tarawa, of Fijians and Ellice Islanders.¹⁸

Campbell was soon convinced that the structure of government as laid down in the *Native Laws* was unworkable, at least in his terms, and embarked on a deliberate policy of removing traditional leaders from office. Kaubure appointed by Campbell became more like village wardens than local government councillors; they were made responsible for the supervision of communal labour on public works, for the cleanliness of their villages, and the control of village policemen. Their activities were controlled by the Chiefs of Kaubure who, in turn, took their instructions from the Magistrates. Within a decade the councils had become agencies of the central government; as Arthur Mahaffy, the Assistant High Commissioner, observed:

The Kaubure are now recruited from among the younger men who may be supposed to be more progressive, less dilatory, and less wedded to ancient customs and methods, but who are certainly less interesting and have less authority among the people. It is, I fancy, a rare thing for any of the modern Kaubure to differ from the opinion of any European Government Officer...¹⁹

Campbell also found that the powers of the High Chiefs in the Ellice Islands were little more than nominal, while in the northern Gilberts it was, in most cases, impossible to find a High Chief with the power and inclination to further the government cause. Here, too, the Magistrates were given increasing powers and by 1907 Campbell was able to report that 'the office of Uea, or High Chief, of an island has been abolished with most beneficial results'.²⁰

For Campbell, peace and public order were but the preliminaries to the wider purpose of colonial rule. Control was the key to civilisation. While the attitudes of savagery might take a generation or more to eliminate, a start could be made with the provision of a new physical environment which would improve on the dirt and untidiness of the old ways and symbolise the new. Moreover, the provision of that environment could be used to establish a rigorous discipline, which would, he hoped, become self-discipline. On Campbell's instructions, all adults were made to perform public works, scattered clan hamlets were consolidated into large villages, roads were laid and houses rebuilt to a standard design. 'Work', Campbell told Walkup, 'is good religion for the natives'.²¹ And to a mission teacher he made a graphic statement of his faith:

He [Campbell] wrote ... in the sand with his cane, thus—two holes, one as Earth, and one as Heaven. The roads of both

Protestants and Catholics he represents as curved lines, but his road is a straight line.²²

Campbell was a stern teacher although even he was surprised, he confessed to Walkup, 'at the amount of hard labour and flogging' needed to achieve his aims on Tarawa.²³ But by the time he left the Protectorate in 1908, the results were plain; Mahaffy, who had seen the Gilberts during Campbell's first year of office, was impressed with the transformation:

The greatest difference which I noted...was the excellent housing accommodation on almost all the islands of the Gilbert Group. A system of extraordinary uniformity has been developed and the best types of native houses have been finally evolved after a series of experiments... The villages are kept in admirable order and the roads are scrupulously clean.²⁴

In the early years of Campbell's administration, however, marked changes only occurred when he was able to give his undivided attention to an island for several weeks at a time. Recognising these difficulties, Thurston had appointed Arthur Mahaffy (later to serve as Colonial Secretary in Fiji and as Assistant High Commissioner) to supervise the governments of Tabiteuea and Nonouti in 1896, but his successor, Sir George O'Brien, was not prepared to sanction any such commitment until the finances of the Protectorate had been securely established. Campbell argued in vain that resident officials could ensure that taxes were fully collected, that the copra in which they were paid could, if of a uniform standard and efficiently collected, be marketed in bulk and thus generate sufficient revenue to cover the costs of an expanded establishment. Undeterred by a lack of sympathy on the part of his superiors Campbell proceeded to persuade the island governments to employ European agents approved by himself. Other Europeans acted as tax collectors, or as receivers of debt payments, and Robert Corrie performed a wide range of duties while employed on a part-time basis as Campbell's interpreter.²⁵ The only addition to the official establishment in these years was a single official to act as Assistant Collector of Revenue, Clerk to the Resident Commissioner, Chief Gaoler and Chief of Police. The man who held this position from 1896 was T.C.T. Potts, a drifter who had spent twenty years in the Pacific variously employed as a Government Agent in the labour trade, a ship's officer, hospital attendant, plantation overseer, and storekeeper.²⁶ Given Potts' shiftless incompetence and Campbell's impatience, conflict between the two men was inevitable. Even after Potts' dismissal in 1900, his intrigues and complaints were to continue to divert official attention from more serious issues.

While O'Brien would not agree to any increase in the incidence of taxation, he did finally agree to the employment of Government Agents on condition that their appointments were temporary and their salaries paid from Island Funds. The most notable of these agents was George Murdoch, who virtually governed Abemama, Kuria,

Aranuka, Nonouti and Tabiteuea from 1898 until the First World War.²⁷ Murdoch, who had served his trading apprenticeship with Corrie and worked for Tem Binoka before going to Guatemala as a labour overseer on the *Montserrat* in 1892 had, on his return, settled on Abemama as a trader. He was literate, articulate, well-respected by the Gilbertese people and fluent in their language; these qualities, combined with an authoritarian instinct as strong as Campbell's own, made him an obvious choice as the Resident's agent. The villages and roads in Murdoch's district were as neat and orderly as those built by Campbell on Tarawa and the symbols of colonial rule—massive coral-limestone prisons and towering flagstaffs—were, if anything, more majestic.

To control these model communities, Campbell established an administrative hierarchy stretching downwards from himself and his agents, to the Magistrates and thence through the Chiefs of Kaubure, Kaubure and police to the people. And because the discretionary actions of these local officials were often partial and inconsistent Campbell built on the framework of Swayne's 1894 *Native Laws* with 'local regulations' made by the island governments. In practice, these regulations were always subject to the Resident's approval and often made under his direction. Because they were, in theory, made by autonomous governments and did not have to be referred to the High Commissioner, they gave Campbell sufficient latitude to ignore or bypass the instructions of his superiors where these came into conflict with his own policies. Of the regulations he did endorse, no less than one-third carried punishments in excess of the 10s fine or two weeks imprisonment specified in the *Laws*. In the tradition of the mission governments of the pre-Protectorate era, the regulations became the means for the surveillance and control of village life. As the government presence became established, the code of regulations developed by Campbell on Tarawa was gradually extended throughout the Protectorate and to Ocean Island, which had been annexed in 1900 and placed under the Resident Commissioner's jurisdiction.

A few of the regulations—for example, those concerning the ownership and transference of land, or the definition of incest according to island law—reinforced traditional codes of behaviour. Many more were intended to eliminate practices contrary to British law, opposed by the missionaries, or found repugnant by Campbell. For example, sorcery, infant betrothal, polygamy, the *eiriki* custom (involving a sexual relationship between a man and his wife's younger sisters), and the soliciting of goods or services (a long-established custom which always involved reciprocation) were all banned, but because these practices were still controlled by community pressures the regulations were ignored by most Islanders and seldom enforced by island governments. In many cases, too, Magistrates remained ignorant of laws made by remote officials and printed only in English. It was a different matter, however, with those regulations that

regimented the day-to-day habits of village life and public behaviour. The consolidation of all houses into defined village areas, the construction of houses to an approved design, the establishment of cemeteries, the building of wells and latrines by each household, and the care of pigs were all controlled by regulations. The upkeep of roads and community buildings was ensured with a public works regulation which made all adults liable for up to four days labour per week. A 9 p.m. curfew was imposed, and people could not leave their home islands without a permit from the Magistrate. Trading could not take place after 6 p.m. Card playing was confined to the evening hours on some islands, banned on others. Nudity, even in children, became an offence. Public dancing was confined to Christmas, New Year, and Queen's Birthday, although to the chagrin of the Protestant missionaries, private 'practice' was hardly affected. The vigilance of officials in performing their duties of administration and law enforcement was encouraged with yet another regulation which made any failing on their part punishable by fines or imprisonment. The prisons were full, but not unpopular; the labour on public works was not much greater 'inside' than out, and all prisoners save those removed to Tarawa by Campbell lived on the enforced generosity of their relatives.²⁸ Learning from their masters, the island governments legislated with enthusiasm although sometimes for sectarian advantage. On some islands, European officials suppressed scores of objectionable petty regulations but many remained; under Campbell's regime the Islanders were, as the High Commissioner in Thurn commented, 'managed, regulated and ruled'.²⁹

Close supervision also enabled Campbell to establish the island governments on a sound financial basis. As the drought in the southern Gilberts passed, and the trading debts in the north were repaid, taxation levels were lifted slightly and, once an ownership register had been prepared for each island, taxes were levied on land-holdings rather than on a *per capita* basis. With the Queen's Tax assessed at approximately 2s per adult, and with revenue from fines and taxes producing twice this amount, the Island Funds showed a combined surplus of £2200 by 1900 and £13 000 by 1906. In the same period, the Protectorate Government accumulated reserves of £8500 from an annual revenue which rose from an initial £2000 to reach £4300 in 1906.³⁰

While Campbell found some among the European residents whom he could recruit to his purpose, there were others he saw as 'obstacles in the way of improving and advancing the condition of the natives'. These 'worthless Aliens', as he called them, included Arthur Eury who, by Campbell's time, had 'gone native' to the extent that he no longer owned a pair of trousers; Collins of Nukulaelae, deported as a drunkard by Campbell but allowed to return by Thurston, although under a prohibition order; and Francis Lodge of Tarawa.³¹ Lodge became a particular object of Campbell's attention. He was nominally a trader but lived for the most part off his wife's land and the immoral

earnings of her daughter. Finding him constantly drunk, interfering in local politics and land disputes, and generally giving an undesirable example, Campbell at first confined Lodge to the islet of Betio and thereafter made his life as difficult as possible by a close scrutiny of his every move before finally deporting him to Suva in 1901. Despite Campbell's intricate legal arguments the High Commissioner found the deportation, like the detention on Betio, to be *ultra vires* and Lodge was permitted to return to Tarawa. There, his inherent vindictiveness and capacity for intrigue soon led him to join forces with Father J.J.T. Phillippe, one of the more aggressive and insubordinate priests of the Sacred Heart Mission, and T.C.T. Potts, who had been dismissed by Campbell in 1900. While Lodge sent to the High Commissioner and to the Colonial Office a constant stream of charges against Campbell (all of which were subsequently withdrawn or dismissed after an official inquiry by Commander F. Addington of HMS *Phoebe* in 1901), Potts tried to bring Campbell's administration into disrepute in the British and colonial press and in parliament. Campbell was charged with organised police brutality, a trebling of taxes leading to deaths by starvation in the southern Gilberts, and with heading a regime under which 'the poor natives... have been flogged whenever it pleased their tyrannical masters.'³² While Campbell certainly had a tendency to bend the law or to ignore its finer points on occasions, such extreme charges could not be sustained.

More serious, however, were the complaints made against Campbell by the Christian missions. In the early years of his administration the Samoan pastors of the LMS and their domination over the island governments in the southern Gilberts and in the Ellice Islands quickly attracted his attention. Where Swayne had been prepared to acquiesce in their assumption of power, Campbell was not. He was outraged at their worldliness and saw their influence over the island governments as a threat to his own and, on each occasion that presented itself, did his utmost to instil the principle that obligations to local and central government took precedence over church affairs. At Tamana in 1896, for example, he accepted that drought would make the collection of taxes difficult but then found that 'a quantity of mats' were ready for presentation to the LMS. On his instructions some were sold on board the SS *Archer* and the proceeds credited to the Island Fund. At Nanumanga, three years later, he found that 7s worth of copra had been collected towards the Queen's Tax of £6 while the pastor's yard 'had the appearance of a thriving trader's establishment' with more than three tons of copra worth about £50 ready for shipment. Without hesitation Campbell insisted that the two lots of copra be exchanged as a warning to the pastor and 'in order to place the Island Fund on a more satisfactory footing'. On discovering that the pastors charged exorbitant fees for performing marriages, Campbell introduced civil marriage to be performed by the Magistrates.³³ Some pastors were also found to be trading on their own account, selling the produce of mission land

while demanding that their parishioners provide them with food, and charging for admission to church membership.³⁴

At first the LMS defended its pastors against Campbell's charges, and criticised his interference in church affairs. Then, in 1900, William Goward established a training school at Beru and the mission finally discovered the extent of its ignorance of the powers and profits of its pastors: 'it seems as if everything has to be done', Goward lamented, 'and alas, worst of all, a very great deal *undone*, owing to the inconsistent incompetent and un-Christ-like men' serving the LMS in the Gilbert and Ellice groups.³⁵ He, like Campbell, soon found himself in open confrontation with pastors determined to protect their privileges; many of the Samoans were dismissed or retired and replaced with Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders. Although Goward sometimes wished that the Resident Commissioner would take a stronger line on 'native dancing'—which, like most Protestant missionaries he considered to be a sign of 'heathen decadence'—their policies were generally in accord and there were few serious differences of opinion between them.

The Roman Catholic missionaries, on the other hand, saw Campbell as their persecutor, as an Orangeman to be opposed at every turn. With zeal and enthusiasm, but with little discretion or knowledge of their island environment, the priests of the MSC began to see Campbell as he saw them—a threat to a grand design for the future of the Protectorate. Campbell had a generalised loyalty to Protestantism on a personal level but, as he told Walkup, he believed that 'one religion was [as] good as another for the natives'.³⁶ His constant concern with the 'progress' of the Islanders under his control made him hostile to any missionaries who interfered with his island governments or provoked sectarian disputes. On more than one occasion he tried to persuade both Catholics and Protestants to accept the concept of separate spheres of influence but neither was prepared to accept the implied compromise with the viewpoint of the other.³⁷

As a consequence, conflict between the rival missions was common and found expression in dissension within the island governments, especially on Nonouti, Beru, Nikunau and Onotoa. On the other southern islands and in the Ellice group, Protestantism prevailed, while in the northern islands Walkup was fighting a losing battle for the American Board and his occasional presence was insufficient to turn back the tide of Catholicism. In their attempts to propagate the faith the MSC missionaries frequently took advantage of the absence of European officials to intervene with the island governments on behalf of their adherents; at Butaritari, one priest tried to secure the reversal of magisterial decisions; at Nikunau, another tried to instruct a court to substitute a fine, which the church would pay, for a term of imprisonment; while at Nonouti yet another called upon his followers to seize and flog the Magistrate.³⁸ In many other instances the priests tried to secure exemption for themselves and their followers from local regulations made, on many islands, by Protestant-dominated

councils. Encouraged by the intolerance of the priests and pastors, the Islanders themselves began to indulge in sectarian harrassment and violence with increasing frequency while, on occasion, 'native pastors and priests quarrelled over, and tugged at, dead bodies for the right of burial'.³⁹

The MSC often appealed to the High Commissioner in Suva for relief from regulations which inhibited its work or had been made in a deliberate attempt to restrict its activities. Two particular sources of grievance were the prohibition on the sale of land to non-native persons and a 'distance regulation' which stipulated that new churches were to be built at least 400 yards from a village *maneaba* or another church, and a lesser distance from any dwelling, and thus effectively removed Catholic mission stations from village areas.⁴⁰ The prohibition on land sales had been in effect since the earliest days of the Protectorate. When the MSC sought to have the regulation changed in 1898, Campbell's stand was emphatically supported by O'Brien and by Swayne who argued that any change in the land law 'would be a breach of faith with the natives and would be considered as such by them'.⁴¹ Similarly, and in the light of increasing sectarian violence, O'Brien endorsed Campbell's distance regulation in 1900. While O'Brien, like Thurston, frequently found fault with other aspects of Campbell's administration, he generally supported his policy of controlling mission activity and, where possible, keeping Catholics and Protestants apart. But there was a change in September 1902 when Sir Henry Jackson, a Roman Catholic more sensitive to the difficulties of his fellow churchmen than O'Brien had been, was appointed High Commissioner.

Because of its discontent with Campbell's administration the Mission sent Father Émile Merg as Visitor Extraordinary to the Gilbert Islands in 1903. As might have been expected, he made little progress with Campbell but in the light of his representations Jackson, without consulting Campbell, amended a number of regulations. The distance regulation was repealed; the maximum limits for the lease of land outside village limits were extended; land could be purchased on the approval of the High Commissioner, after investigation by the Resident Commissioner, in parcels of up to one acre within villages, five acres near villages, and fifty acres elsewhere; and tobacco could henceforth be used as currency, a concession that gave to those wishing to use it in this way—particularly traders and the MSC—the margin between its wholesale and retail value.⁴² Moreover, Jackson began to question Campbell's code of local regulations, which had also been criticised by Merg, and challenged, incorrectly, the Resident Commissioner's power to approve regulations without reference to the High Commissioner.⁴³

The agreement was a victory for the MSC, and Merg was lavish in his praise of Jackson:

[Our agreement]... made me realise once again—what I ever have expected from the very name of British Rule—that sooner

or later fair-play, justice and liberty would, for a certainty, be the moving spirit of all its Laws, either at Home or in the lonely and distant islands of the Pacific...

This happy conclusion of our negotiations adds another jewel to the wealth of signal services Your Excellency has already rendered to the British Crown; for no one cannot but esteem and love its Rule, when it is animated by that liberal and fair-minded spirit which characterises Your Excellency's administration.⁴⁴

Accustomed to opposition from within the Protectorate, Campbell was incensed with this interference from his superior and the failure to consult him on major policy changes:

... I feel sure that had not Sir Henry Jackson been grossly misinformed by certain prejudiced individuals or had His Excellency been acquainted with the Native Laws, or with the policy of his predecessors, a policy of continuity and impartiality, or had Sir Henry Jackson had any personal experience or knowledge of the Gilbert and Ellice Groups and their particular position, both administrative and social, then His Excellency would not have expressed disapproval of my endeavours to administer these Protectorates ... in the face of universal opposition from non-native persons possessed with selfish aims utterly opposed to a policy aiming at protecting and advancing the interests of a numerous native community.⁴⁵

The war was not over, however, and with distance and determination on his side, and armed with an unshakeable conviction that he alone knew what was best for the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders, Campbell set out to subvert the accord reached between Merg and Jackson. He began by refusing to suspend the distance regulation until he had been relieved of all responsibility for any disturbances that might occur as a consequence of the change. He protested that to act otherwise would represent his 'criminal acquiescence' in a decision given in response to 'the misrepresentations, not to say deceit' of plaintiffs opposed to his administration.⁴⁶ After receiving a strongly worded reply from Everard im Thurn, Jackson's successor, Campbell allowed the matter to drop from his official correspondence but then instructed the island governments to retain the original regulation.⁴⁷ Capitalising on the difficulties of communication within the Protectorate, and between it and the outside world, Campbell ignored the revised land legislation for more than a year. When the MSC finally learned of the proclamation of the new Regulation, and submitted applications for lease and purchase under its provisions, Campbell at first made difficulties where he could, and ignored the applications where he could not. When complaints were made to im Thurn, Campbell pointed out that his constant requests for a Protectorate vessel had been declined, that charters were expensive, and that, in his estimation, the surveys required under the legislation would cost some £800; he asked the High Commissioner to approve the expenditure. It was im Thurn's turn to prevaricate; having visited the Protectorate in

1905 he had a great deal of sympathy for Campbell's viewpoint and solved the impasse, although without explicitly acknowledging it, by again changing the law and re-introducing a ban on land sales.⁴⁸

Im Thurn's visit of August 1905 had been for the express purpose of investigating the charges made against Campbell by the MSC, by Potts, and by Lodge. The claims made by the latter two were, as before, dismissed without difficulty. Im Thurn found that the conflict between Campbell and the MSC had reached the level of a personalised crusade and that while Campbell's impatience and irritability were significant contributory factors to the disputes the Mission itself was the main offender. Im Thurn, like Campbell, believed in the usefulness of Christian missions as a civilising agency but, also like Campbell, he wanted each denomination kept to a clearly defined area. He found that in the Gilberts the MSC missionaries had 'persistently ignored the work of their [Protestant] predecessors' and had 'by every means in their power striven to get a foothold ... even against the wishes of the already Christian natives'; that many of the priests were insufficiently disciplined by Bishop Leray and that some were openly disrespectful of him and had 'not always been conscious of the interests and rights of any outside their own church'; and that the issues in dispute had been magnified out of all proportion 'by the bad temper and want of tact by most of those concerned'.⁴⁹

Regarding the Resident Commissioner, Im Thurn commented:

I think that Mr Campbell is a good Administrator spoiled, I hope not irremediably, by too long detention in office in so remote a place and in such trying circumstances of climate and surroundings; and I think that a transfer should as soon as possible be found for him.⁵⁰

Alternative positions were few, however, and a partial palliative was found at the beginning of 1908 in the removal of the Protectorate headquarters to Ocean Island where the phosphate industry was absorbing increasing official attention and where, Im Thurn hoped, the company of other Europeans would have a soothing effect on Campbell's temper. When the Colonial Office suggested that Campbell was 'not good enough' to be Colonial Secretary in Fiji but a transfer to Tonga as Agent and Consul might be in order, Im Thurn demurred:

[Campbell]... after and because of a residence of over twelve years in the Gilbert Islands has developed idiosyncracies of temper and tact which would, I am inclined to think, make it a dangerous experiment to place him in the very peculiar political and social conditions which prevail in Tonga.⁵¹

Within a few months, Campbell was in Tonga. There, as Im Thurn had predicted, his 'idiosyncracies of temper and tact' drew him into a series of controversies which led to his eventual removal from office.⁵²

In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, however, Campbell's influence remained long after his ignominious departure from the colonial

service. Although his impact had been greatest in the northern and central Gilberts, all islands of the Protectorate had felt his presence in the shape of their governments and the comprehensiveness of their laws. Im Thurn had recommended that the latter should be 'discreetly relaxed' but this did not happen because Murdoch and many of Campbell's other agents continued as before, because the Magistrates were unwilling to relinquish their powers, and because in the southern Gilberts and in the Ellice Islands the pastors of the LMS found that by dominating the Magistrates and by making a few informal revisions in the laws, the island governments could serve the church as well as the state. Further north, the departure of Campbell removed much of the intensity of Roman Catholic opposition to the Government. Moreover, the withdrawal of the American Board in the early years of the 20th century, and the desultory efforts of the LMS in its wake, allowed the MSC to greatly increase its following and, through its converts, to reduce the hostility of the island governments.

Although Campbell created island governments that were agencies for centralised control it was, to a large extent, inevitable that he should do so. While the structure of government envisaged by Swayne was based on the relatively successful Fijian experience, and was in tune with experiments being conducted elsewhere in the Empire, most notably in Nigeria, these models were hardly applicable to the situation in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. On a superficial level, Swayne's constitutions were in accordance with customary modes, but the departures were probably sufficiently great to ensure failure and disorder in all except the Ellice Islands where the Samoan pastors had already made modifications of the type introduced by Campbell in the Gilberts. The major deficiency, and the major difference from the African successes in indirect rule, was that the scale of traditional politics had inhibited the growth of any concept of statehood, even at a localised level, or of depersonalised systems of administration, taxation and justice. Of all the islands nominally placed under High Chiefs by Swayne, only at Butaritari and Abemama were those invested with this office endowed with sufficient power to make the system work without massive backing from the central government. On all other islands of the Gilbert group rivalries between districts, whether based on loyalty to a chief or a *maneaba* government, were too great to admit a single island government under traditional leaders. Campbell was thus faced with a choice: to educate traditional leaders to meet the demands of colonial rule, and the people to accept the change; or to choose and work through men who, for their own reasons, would serve his ends. Lacking the staff, transport, financial resources and patience for the former course, he chose the latter. By inclination Campbell was an autocrat. His was a policy of control, because he believed that control was the only basis for future 'improvement' and 'advancement'. But with his successors pre-occupied at Ocean Island, and a general neglect of the Gilbert and Ellice groups, control became an end in itself until the arrival of a new generation of District Officers in the 1930s.

CHAPTER SIX

The origins of bitterness: the Banabans and the mining of phosphate, 1900-1942

Ocean Island, little known and ignored when the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorates were declared in 1892, soon became the focus of British attention. The exploitation of the island's rich phosphate deposits (which amounted to some 20 million tonnes) brought the original landowners, the mining agencies, and the colonial authorities into a triangular conflict of interest that was to last for the lifetime of the phosphate deposits. Except for a brief period of compliance in the early 1900s, the Banabans steadily resisted the encroachment of the mining industry on to their lands and their lifestyle. To this end they opposed the alienation of their ancestral lands until their right to do so was removed by legislation in 1928. The result was a legacy of bitterness that led finally to a court action, unprecedented in kind, which brought under scrutiny the manner in which Britain had fulfilled its colonial trust.

Ocean Island, or Banaba as it was known to its inhabitants, is a raised reef island to the west of the Gilbert group; it has an area of less than 6.5 square kilometres. The island was first sighted from a European vessel, the *Diana*, in 1801 but took its name from the ship *Ocean* which called three years later.¹ From the 1840s it was a popular port of call for whalers who bought coconuts, firewood, vegetables and the sexual favours of the island's prostitutes. The decline of whaling in the late 1860s coincided with the onset of the most serious drought in the recorded history of the island. Many sought refuge as indentured labourers in Hawaii, Tahiti or Queensland, but many more died of starvation; the population fell from a thousand or more to a mere 450 at the end of the century. In the 1890s the Banabans' main contact with the outside world was through the vessels of the American Board, come to visit the Gilbertese catechist who had been on the island since 1885, and the SS *Archer*, a trading vessel owned by Henderson and Macfarlane of Auckland. In 1897 this firm joined with J.T. Arundel's guano mining company to form the Pacific Islands Company with Lord Stanmore (formerly, as Sir Arthur Gordon, Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific) as chairman. The new Company tried to obtain concessions from the Colonial Office which would have given it charter rights to a commercial monopoly

and governmental powers over vast tracts in the Solomon Islands; some commercial concessions were issued but these were soon left on one side when the Company found the phosphate bonanza on Ocean Island and Nauru.²

The deposits were discovered when Albert Ellis, a New Zealander employed by the Company in Sydney, noticed a similarity between a rock sample (believed to be fossilised wood) from Nauru and phosphate rocks he had seen on Baker Island in the Phoenix group. When tests on this sample, and on others obtained from Ocean Island, proved the existence of high quality deposits on both islands, steps were taken to secure the rights and profits of exploitation for the Company.³

Ellis himself went to Ocean Island. He arrived on 3 May 1900 and, after a quick survey in the morning, and a 'good deal of talk' in the afternoon, the 'king and chief' were persuaded to sign an agreement drafted by Ellis:⁴

Ocean Island, May 3rd, 1900.

An agreement made this day between the Pacific Islands Company, Limited, of London, England, and of Sydney, hereinafter called the "said Company" of the one part, and the undersigned king and natives of Ocean Island (Paanopa) for and on behalf of the entire population of Ocean Island, hereinafter called the "said natives" of the other part—

1. The said natives concede to the said Company the sole right to raise and ship all the rock and alluvial phosphate on Ocean Island for and on account of the said Company.
2. The said natives agree that the said Company shall have the right to erect buildings, lay tram lines, make roads, build jetties and shipping places, or make any other arrangements necessary for the working of the phosphate deposits, also to bring labourers from other countries for the purpose of carrying on the aforesaid work.
3. The said Company agrees not to remove any alluvial phosphate from where cocoanut or other trees or plants cultivated by the said natives are growing, but to have the right to remove any non-fruit-bearing trees which may interfere with the working of the phosphate deposits.
4. The said Company agrees to keep a store or stores on Ocean Island where the said natives may buy goods at prices current in the Gilbert Group and shall purchase from the said natives cocoanuts, fruits, vegetables, fish, etc., at prices current in the Gilbert Group, the said natives agreeing that the said Company shall have the sole right to keep stores or trading stations on Ocean Island.
5. In consideration of the foregoing privileges, the said Company agrees to pay the said natives at a rate of fifty pounds (£50) per annum or trade to that value at prices current in the Gilbert Group, payable half-yearly.

6. This agreement to be in force for a term of nine hundred and ninety-nine (999) years.

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS COMPANY LIMITED.
per Albert F. Ellis

TEMATI, King of Ocean Island.

His X mark.

Witness: E. Riakim.
KARIATABEWA, Chief.

His X mark.

Witness: E. Riakim.
Witness to all signatures,
J. MAKINSON.

In his own published account of the transaction, and even in his diary, Ellis made no mention of the terms although in the latter document he noted that 'as his [the king's] authority was undisputed, it was not considered necessary for any of the other natives to sign'.⁵

Ellis's initial misconception regarding the status and power of the 'king' is understandable. Following the distribution of lands occasioned by the invasion from Beru in the 15th century, the former inhabitants retained Tabwewa district and, in addition to other special powers and privileges, their chief was granted the right to board visiting canoes, to take as his own such of their contents as he desired and, in return, to entertain and provide for their occupants. In the 19th century the Tabwewa chief and his agents, by virtue of these prerogatives, initiated all contact with European vessels and sometimes imposed a ban on trading unless an appropriate gift was forthcoming.⁶ But these powers were specific and limited, and did not give undisputed power as assumed by Ellis. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Ellis, even if he did not know this when the agreement was signed, certainly became aware of it during the course of his visit. He soon found that all land on the island was owned by individuals and that no chief could secure land for him without the consent of its owner. Moreover, in response to hostility generated by his exclusive dealings with Temati of Tabwewa, he also found it necessary to hold talks with the chiefs and people of all villages and to offer them a share in the spoils.⁷

In commenting on the agreement of 1900, E.C. Eliot, Resident Commissioner from 1913 to 1920, wrote in his autobiography:

About 1916 ... I took statements from three of the chiefs who were fêted in the s.s. *Archer* in 1900. The Company had tried to make out that the chiefs were the representatives for all island land held "in common," and could therefore lease the whole island on behalf of their subjects. ... When it became known on the Island that the Company's representatives had made some "paper" which was said to bear the marks of the chiefs, the islanders repudiated the document...⁸

A similar picture is painted by the missionary Walkup who also arrived at Ocean Island on 3 May and spoke to Ellis before leaving on the 7th:

We found the Steamer "Archer" at Banaba, and they landed two Agents to rent the Island for "phosphate of lime" to ship at \$250.00 a year. The highest cheif [*sic*] signed their paper, but the other cheifs refused, saying the land belonged to the people.⁹

Walkup's comment is of interest not so much because it casts serious doubts on the veracity of Ellis's account, but because it expresses, even before mining began, Banaban opposition to the whole enterprise on the basis of attitudes towards land. A few years later it emerged also that Temori, the Nui Islander who had been Ellis's interpreter, was incapable of reading the agreement in English and that he had only translated the general import of the document as told to him by Ellis. The term of 999 years was not mentioned, Ellis simply stated that mining would continue after his death.¹⁰ When Ellis recalled this initial prospecting adventure in his account of the phosphate industry published in 1935 he commented:

The principal native visitor was Temati, called "The King" by the steamer people, but it appeared afterwards that he was more a "Minister for Foreign Affairs." It was his province to establish communication with the few vessels that called at the island, and come to an understanding with the captains regarding the object of their visit. Owing to his position therefore, he took a prominent part in the proceedings which followed.¹¹

and also that:

Each village had its head chief, except perhaps Tapiwa [Tabwewa], where there were other leading men beside Temati. There did not appear to be anyone of supreme authority on the island...¹²

Thus Ellis, albeit much later, effectively conceded that the agreement was invalid as a basis for any mining operation. Despite these obvious deficiencies, however, and the suspicious nature of its enactment, the agreement of 3 May 1900 was subsequently accepted, by the Colonial Office as well as by the Company, as a charter for the conditions under which mining should proceed.

In London the Company's case was strongly urged upon politicians and officials alike by Lord Stanmore. The Company, he said, was prepared to give an undertaking 'not to interfere with native or other cultivation, houses, gardens, etc.' and ventured to suggest that the payment to the Banabans of a portion of any rental agreed upon 'would probably completely prevent any inconvenient interference on their part with the Company's operations.'¹³ When the proposal to include Ocean Island within the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate was referred to Sir George O'Brien, he opposed it on the grounds that Ocean Island was removed from the rest of the

Protectorate, that it would be difficult and costly to administer, and there was little point in including it in the Protectorate 'merely for the purpose of preventing its falling into the hands of some other Power'—a denial of the argument that had brought both the Gilbert and Ellice groups under British control. Nor, O'Brien argued, should such a step be taken simply 'to ease the way for the Pacific Islands Company'. According to the official record, Campbell agreed with most of these arguments but other evidence suggests that he was aware of, and supported, the Company's plans and later sought employment with it.¹⁴ Under continued pressure from Stanmore, who still insisted that his Company should be protected from foreign adventurers, the Secretary of State agreed to issue a licence. The original intention was only to include Ocean Island within the Protectorate but the licence referred to 'a certain Island belonging to Her Majesty' although no previous steps had been taken to make it so. This wording was, however, held by the Colonial Office to be the 'equivalent to annexation' although the Foreign Office later rejected this view and asserted that the licence only confirmed British possession initiated by Ellis's raising of 'The Flag'—it was in reality a Red Ensign—on 5 May 1900 and his subsequent occupation of the island.¹⁵

Not satisfied with a mere piece of paper, Stanmore pressed for a man-of-war to formally annex Ocean Island. The Colonial Office thought it unnecessary, and declined. Stanmore persisted and, as he had done when seeking his Solomon Islands concessions, directly approached Lord Selborne, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who finally agreed. Sir John Anderson, Permanent Secretary at the Colonial Office, protested that the Government was being asked 'to waste coal at 30/- a ton to humour a private individual' but without effect, and on 28 September 1901 Captain R.G.O. Tupper of HMS *Pylades* duly raised the Union Jack on the island.¹⁶ By proclamation the Resident Commissioner's jurisdiction was extended to the island, its occupants became subject to Protectorate law, and the Company's mining monopoly was confirmed.¹⁷

By 1907 the Company had secured mining rights at Nauru from the Jaluit Gesellschaft and had sold to the latter its trading interests in the Gilbert, Ellice and Marshall Islands. The Pacific Phosphate Company had then been formed from the remnants of the old business and, in the process, Stanmore and his colleagues had persuaded the Secretary of State to extend the term of their licence from 21 to 99 years. In negotiating the payments required in return, the Company secured a low 6d per ton royalty (to begin in 1906) by understating, by half, the value of Ocean Island phosphate.¹⁸

The Company soon began to prosper. Between 1899 and 1901 it had been close to liquidation; in 1902 a debenture issue of £60 000 could not be filled, even by Stanmore, Arundel and their friends. William Lever, the soap manufacturer, took the opportunity of acquiring a large stake in the enterprise. But by 1904 the tide had turned, dramatically and completely, in the Company's favour. In 1903 it paid

a dividend of 25 per cent and then, after a heavy capital outlay over the next two years, dividends of 30 and 50 per cent were paid on a capital of £125 000 in 1906 and 1907. In 1908 the Company made a fully paid, two-for-one bonus share issue and still paid a 50 per cent dividend. In 1909 a dividend of 35 per cent was paid on the new capital of £375 000 (two-thirds of which had been created by the profits of the previous year) and a further 375 000 £1 shares, one-third paid, were issued on a one-for-one basis. In effect, profits over 1908-9 alone amounted to a return of some 455 per cent on the 1907 capital.¹⁹ Between 1900 and 1913 the Company made profits in excess of £1 750 000; in the same time it paid to the Banabans for land, trees and phosphate something less than £10 000.

By 1908 the Company's operations on Ocean Island were attracting public attention in Britain. T.C.T. Potts, as part of his campaign against Campbell, alleged maltreatment of the labourers employed by the Company, the exploitation of the Banabans, and dishonesty on the part of the Company. A number of Members of Parliament, apparently briefed by Potts, asked questions in the House of Commons.²⁰ Nor was it surprising that they did so. Under Protectorate law, sales of 'native land' were forbidden. Apparently on the assumption that it was exempt, the Company continued to buy land until it was stopped from doing so in 1902 and it so resisted any interference with its 'purchases' that these were finally legalised on the instructions of the Secretary of State.²¹ The Company also met with increasing resistance from the Banabans once they discovered that their lands would be uninhabitable after mining. At first the Company had concentrated on readily available surface rock, and on isolated pockets of phosphate in areas devoid of vegetation, but it soon began to encroach on planted lands. In December 1903 R.H. Cogswell, then acting as Resident Commissioner, reported that in the Company's view only thickly planted groves came within the meaning of areas 'where coconut or other trees or plants [were] cultivated' by the Banabans while the latter claimed that the Company could 'only work lands which are cleared but not planted, and heavily timbered lands which do not contain food producing trees'. Despite the High Commissioner's insistence that the Company had no right 'to destroy fruit trees whether thinly planted or not' Campbell again had to remonstrate a few months later:

It is stated in your agreement that no damage is to be done to food producing trees. I regret to find that this has not been observed; excavating up to the butts of trees, cutting and exposing their roots, is a distinct injury.²²

The solution, initiated by Cogswell, was for the Company to secure leases, usually for ten years, and then to sign separate deeds for the purchase of phosphate and trees. Working under these agreements, the Company employed more than a thousand labourers, mostly Gilbertese, and by 1908 it was exporting some 200 000 tons of

phosphate a year. The Company did concede that mined land—a desert of coral pinnacles—was ‘of little use to the natives unless trees are again planted on it’ but argued that any concern or financial provision for the long-term welfare of the Banabans was premature on the grounds that by the time the island was worked out, perhaps a century hence, ‘the native inhabitants of Ocean Island—already few—may not improbably have wholly disappeared.’²³ The Company also argued that while it could not wilfully remove or destroy food-bearing trees the owners still had the right ‘to keep such a tree standing, or to fell it, or to part with it for a consideration’ and that it was on this basis that mining had proceeded. The Company’s piecemeal approach to mining, made necessary by the impossibility of obtaining contiguous blocks of land, also affected remaining, unpurchased, lands which quickly became unproductive once their perimeters were quarried to a depth of 10 metres or more.

The rejection of the Company’s viewpoint by the Colonial Office, and a general hardening of attitudes towards it, was derived in part from sensitivity towards the high profits being made from mining and also followed from the closer observance of the industry made possible by the removal of Protectorate headquarters to Ocean Island in 1908. As early as 1903 Campbell had urged the appointment of a permanent official to the island, but he had, in effect, been overruled by Stanmore who had managed to convince the Colonial Office that because there would be little work for such an official the probability of his ‘over-interference in the Company’s affairs’ would be ‘perilously increased’. Campbell persisted however, and repeatedly asked that the expense of an official for Ocean Island be covered by the payment of revenue received for the mining licence to protectorate rather than to imperial funds. These proposals were accepted finally, and the headquarters moved, though more with a view to improving the living conditions for the Resident than for the purpose of maintaining a close watch on the Company.²⁴

Captain John Quayle Dickson, Resident Commissioner from September 1909, quickly adopted a pro-Banaban stance. It was he who first queried the legality of the ‘phosphate and trees’ agreements and, when the Secretary of State agreed that these were *de facto* land sales, forced the Company to seek additional mining lands and the regularisation of existing holdings. Dickson proposed the demarcation of specified mining areas, sufficient for twenty years, amounting to some 250 acres. Payment was to be at a rate of £20 per acre for land; there were to be additional payments for trees; and the Company was to be asked to make a liberal contribution to a trust fund intended, in the long term, to provide for the resettlement of the Banabans on another island.²⁵ Dickson subsequently tried to lift the price to £100 per acre but found that tentative agreement had already been reached between the Company and the Colonial Office.²⁶

The Banabans still refused to agree to the lease of their lands and found Dickson a sympathetic listener to their grievances:

... the main idea seemed to be to preserve the island for their descendants; they said that they had been foolish in the past in disposing of their land, but now realised the mistake they had made, as they had no idea when the Company started operations that it would result in the devastation of the island ...²⁷

When the Banabans persisted in this attitude, renegotiation became possible and the Banabans found another advocate in Sir Henry May, im Thurn's successor as High Commissioner. Using information supplied by the Company, May demonstrated that for each acre of land the Company mined some 12 600 tons of phosphate at a net profit of £1 2s 0d per acre; that is, a return of nearly £14 000 from land that had cost about £20.²⁸

At Ocean Island, Dickson's well-known view that the price offered was inadequate was sufficient to forestall Banaban compliance; May, sympathetic but impatient, and under pressure from the Colonial Office, threatened to place the settlement 'in other hands'. Meanwhile the Colonial Office had reluctantly accepted most of Dickson's arguments while being strongly critical of other aspects of his administration and proceeded, in direct negotiations with the Company, to secure much better terms for the Banabans. Within months, however, the Colonial Office had removed Dickson. Perhaps it had accepted the Company's argument that no settlement, however generous, would be reached while Dickson remained at Ocean Island. The record sheds no light on this but it is clear that senior officials in the Colonial Office were concerned with irregularities in Dickson's administration. He was offered the more junior (and less well paid) position of Colonial Secretary of the Falkland Islands—provided he paid his own fares and found his own accommodation.²⁹

His successor was Edward Carlyon Eliot, an able officer with a humanitarian reputation already established in West Africa and the West Indies. Initially, Eliot accepted the equity of the revised settlement reached between the Colonial Office and the Company in the latter part of 1912. Because Dickson had established the image of the Resident Commissioner as the defender of Banaban interests, and it was Eliot, Dickson's successor, who brought and urged the acceptance of the new offer, a majority of the landowners signed the agreement within a few weeks of his arrival.³⁰

Under the agreement the Company was permitted to lease 145 acres within the delimited area (to add to the 105 acres it already held) at a cost of between £40 and £60 per acre depending on the quality and location of the land; compensation was also to be paid for food-bearing trees. To the royalty of 6d per ton already paid to the Government there was to be a further 6d per ton (worth about £5000 a year) paid to a trust fund with the interest being payable to the Banabans or spent for their benefit. The Banabans were to retain the use of their lands until they were needed for mining and, before being returned to their owners, lands were to be replanted to the extent that they had been before mining.³¹

There was, however, a residual distrust arising partly from Eliot's arrival at Ocean Island in a Company vessel. To help dispel this, Eliot arranged for annual cash payments (usually of £5) to 'aged and infirm' Banabans. Then, to alleviate suspicion of the Company, he arranged for the secondment of a government surveyor from Fiji to clarify the boundaries and exact area of lands within the mining area. The surveyor, George Reilly, found that the size of the areas to be leased was almost invariably larger than shown on the Company's plans and commented:

I found that these leases, without exception, had been very carelessly surveyed: so carelessly in fact as to give the impression that the bearings had been taken with a pocket compass and the distances paced.³²

Because the Banabans had requested an independent survey be conducted, Reilly's salary and expenses were debited to the Banaban Fund.³³

More serious Banaban opposition to the Company's occupation of the new area rose early in 1914 over the issue of compensation for food-bearing trees. The agreement had not included specific details and the Company wished to adhere to the former practice of paying only for coconut trees on the grounds that the Banabans no longer ate pandanus or wild almonds. Ellis, now the Company's manager at Ocean Island, protested that the dispute was 'an attempt on the part of the Banabans to increase the already munificent terms arranged by the Colonial Office with our Board of Directors'.³⁴ Eliot backed the Banaban demand but, in the face of Ellis's intransigence, recommended that payments ranging from 4s for a mature pandanus to 1s for a lime should be made, at a cost of £1050, from the newly created Banaban Fund but without the knowledge of the Banabans.³⁵

The apparent lull that followed the completion of the survey was only a prelude to further disputes arising from some of the specific provisions of the agreement. For example the Company, which also enjoyed a trading monopoly at Ocean Island, usually charged Japanese (mostly tradesmen employed in the phosphate industry) and Europeans about half as much for goods as it charged 'Kanakas, Banabans and Coolies'. In implementing its undertaking to adopt a uniform price system, the Company first raised all prices to the higher level and gave discounts to its European staff. Government officials were offered similar concessions, a move which prompted Vaskess, Secretary to the Western Pacific High Commission, to comment that the 'proposal looks ... uncommonly like an attempt to bribe the officials to allow further fleecing of the Banabans!'³⁶ When this and other stratagems were rejected the Company introduced a single price system but raised the salaries of European staff. There were also disputes over lands formerly held under 'phosphate and trees' agreements. It had been agreed in London that the Company could exchange leases which lay outside the mining zone for equivalent areas

within it, but few of the Banabans were prepared to agree (especially as most of these leases had expired) and Eliot, who had developed an increasing dislike for the Company and its operations, declined to persuade them. The most contentious issue, however, was the replanting of worked-out lands. Some efforts were made, and a few trees established, but in the areas where there was a high concentration of coral pinnacles the scheme had little chance of success. Although the Company's ships usually arrived in ballast there was no apparent consideration given (by either Company or Government) to the importation of soil. The Company went so far as to suggest that the Banabans ought to be persuaded to carry soil from their unworked lands (to prevent any unwitting trespass by the Company) and even that they should be compelled to do so under a public works regulation akin to those enforced for the maintenance of village buildings and roads in the Gilberts. Although there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm about the Company's efforts, any chance of success was prevented by a two-year drought. By July 1917 Eliot had to report that the replanting scheme was 'as dead as the trees which have been planted in the worked out areas from time to time' and that even in the unmined areas half the trees were dead.³⁷ The concept of replanting was henceforth dropped to be revived in the 1970s as the basis for a Banaban claim for compensation under the 1913 agreement.

The defendants in the case were the British Phosphate Commissioners who, since 1920, had been responsible for the mining of phosphate at Ocean Island and Nauru. At the outbreak of war in 1914 Nauru, then a German possession, was occupied by Australian forces. In 1919 Nauru was entrusted to the British Empire under a League of Nations Mandate; civil administration became the responsibility of Australia, and the Governments of Britain, Australia and New Zealand assumed control of the phosphate industry through the British Phosphate Commissioners.³⁸ In the following year the BPC also bought out the Company's rights and assets at Ocean Island.

The BPC immediately sought a reduction in taxes payable at Ocean Island and, despite holding reserves that were adequate for at least twenty years, permission to acquire a further 100 acres from the Banabans.³⁹ No progress was made on this issue, however, and in 1923 the BPC made a direct approach to the Colonial Office for assistance in the acquisition of 150 acres. Because of the location of the land in question, the request raised fundamental issues regarding the future of the Banabans, the future of the industry, and the incompatibility of their respective interests. McClure, the Resident Commissioner, cabled:

... application involves interference with one village and commencement of alienation of entire best food producing area both within 5 years. It is almost inevitable that eventually removal of Banabans elsewhere must follow. Anticipate vigorous initial protest by Banabans. If their consent is

obtainable it will only be secured after prolonged and delicate negotiations.⁴⁰

As McClure had anticipated, the Banabans persisted in their refusal to alienate any further land even after some fifty acres, including the Buakonikai village site, had been excluded from the proposed mining area.

However, the interests of the industry were considered of primary importance by the new High Commissioner, Sir Cecil Rodwell, who had served in South Africa for eighteen years before being posted to Fiji. Rodwell sought a reversal of previous policies with a recommendation that, except for specified 'native reserves', the entire island should be placed at the disposal of the BPC in return for fixed rents and royalties. He thought that any negotiation with the Banabans was pointless and that they should be presented with a 'firmly but considerably worded ultimatum' which would make clear the priority accorded the industry and recognise the inevitability of Banaban resettlement on another island 'where their welfare would be a primary instead of secondary concern of administration.'⁴¹

Surprisingly, in the light of subsequent developments, it was the Colonial Office which rejected this approach and Devonshire, the Secretary of State, issued the most categorical statement of Banaban rights in the history of the industry:

Concession...imposed obligation to respect rights of inhabitants of Ocean Island. These rights extend to full ownership of land and minerals thereunder.

All subsequent transactions with natives have been based upon that principle and any negotiation for acquisition...of further facilities must be conducted with strict regard to fact that landed rights of natives are at their own disposal ...⁴²

Protected in this way the Banabans made clear that, despite a veneer of western materialism, their primary concern was still to protect their ancestral heritage as embodied in their land. McClure, at least, had few doubts as to their motives:

Although a small minority might conceivably consider an increased price per acre as sufficient inducement to part with their holdings, the majority of the Banabans are, I think, of one mind on this subject. What they desire, in effect, is that His Majesty's Government should prevent the acquisition by the British Phosphate Commission of any further land whatever, and should permit them, the Banabans, to remain in undisputed possession of the remainder of their own island for ever.⁴³

Nor was Banaban conservatism confined to the elders of the community; indeed many of the traditional leaders had been discredited by their earlier ties with the Company and by their membership of the Native Government. By the early 1920s the opposition to any further land alienation was being led by younger men, many of whom were mission-educated. Most prominent among

them was Rotan Tito who became, and for half a century remained, the leading spokesman for Banaban interests.

By virtue of constant approaches from both the Government and the BPC the Banabans were obliged to negotiate and declared their stance by placing an impossibly high price upon their lands. When approached in 1925 they asked for £5000 per acre. Although the Company rejected both the suggested price and the justification advanced for it, the new High Commissioner, Sir Eyre Hutson, was impressed:

If one takes into consideration the fact that the sale price of the land now held by the Commission was £60 per acre, and that an acre of phosphate land produces, on a conservative estimate from 25 to 30 000 tons of phosphate at a nett value of 30/- per ton, ... the proceeds being thus £37,500 to £48,000 per acre, the reply made by the Banaban ... does not appear to me to be an unreasonable one.⁴⁴

The Banabans, determined to climb beyond the reach of the BPC, were soon asking for '£5 per car'—a car holding about a ton—which would be the equivalent of an annual royalty of £1 000 000.⁴⁵

The negotiations were carried on by the colonial government on behalf of the BPC and it fell to Arthur Grimble to persuade the Banabans to part with their lands. By this time Grimble had been serving in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony for thirteen years, and for ten of those years he had been seeking transfer (with promotion) to a less remote corner of the Empire. Debilitated by chronic dysentery, suffering from what he called 'mental and metaphysical starvation', and embittered by his failure to obtain a position commensurate with his talents as he saw them, Grimble hoped that a solution to the Ocean Island impasse might be his passport to greater things.⁴⁶ Feeling the weight of pressure from London and from Suva, and faced with continued Banaban intransigence, Grimble cajoled, intrigued and threatened in his pursuit of a settlement. By doing so he destroyed the bond that had previously existed between the Banabans and their perceived protector, the Resident Commissioner. Although Grimble did little to affect the ultimate outcome the Banabans came to hold him responsible for the final deprivation of their birthright.

In 1926 when the BPC wanted to open negotiations with an offer of £100 per acre and a royalty on future exports of 9d per ton, Grimble suggested that the terms would have to be doubled to make them acceptable to the Banabans.⁴⁷ Harold Gaze, the BPC's General Manager, and Grimble subsequently agreed that an offer be made to the Banabans on the basis of: £150 per acre for land; increased compensation for trees; the creation of a new provident fund with £20 000 of the existing Banaban Fund to be supplemented by a payment of 2d per ton until, with compounding interest, a total of £175 000 should be reached; a royalty of 4d per ton to be distributed among those who now, or who had in the past, sold land to the BPC with annual payments not to exceed £5000; and an additional royalty of

4½d per ton, with an annual limit of £5750, for distribution to all Banabans. The offer was to be accompanied by guarantees that no further land would be required within fifteen years; and that the Banabans would never be asked to leave Ocean Island against their will.⁴⁸ The Secretary of State agreed with the general terms but ruled that specific guarantees should not be given; he also suggested that the Resident Commissioner inform the Banabans that he endorsed the BPC's offer and thought that it was 'in the interests of the Empire' that they should agree.⁴⁹

Grimble immediately began to lay the groundwork for negotiations with a 'series of intimate talks with individually influential Banabans.'⁵⁰ Then, over a period of two months, he tried to persuade the Banabans to agree to the terms of £150 per acre and a combined royalty of 10½d per ton. He met them individually, in small groups, and in massed meetings; he managed to woo compliance from a few, but the many remained implacably opposed to further mining. Initially he adopted a paternal approach, advising the Banabans to accept the proffered terms because he thought them to be fair, and he 'Warned them not to alienate their steadfast friend, the Administration'.⁵¹ He appealed to their sense of imperial loyalty, telling them that the whole Empire 'was holding out its hands to them, asking to be fed, and that they cannot shut their ears to that prayer'.⁵² On occasions he exploited family rivalries, or disputes over such matters as fishing rights, in his attempt to divide and rule among the Banabans. The Native Government, and the Banaban Committee of village representatives, most of whom were old men, were urged to persuade others of the reasonableness, even generosity, of the BPC offer. He warned that unsold lands would become isolated, inaccessible and worthless in a barren wasteland of coral pinnacles. His strongest arguments hinged on the dependence of the new Banaban lifestyle on a cash income and, by implication, the continued presence of the BPC:

It remains only to work upon their fears a little more than I have done up to date. [The Banaban] Committee must be impressed with the consequences to the Banabans if ever the B.P.C. should leave the island.⁵³

It was, he thought, only necessary to 'Rub it in' a little more; he tried, but without success. He argued that to ask an impossible price was to cause the death of the BPC and, as a consequence, the death of the Banaban community. The 'words of death' were to reject the offer, the 'words of life' were to agree. Whenever he expanded on this theme, and suggested that the departure of the BPC would also mean the loss of doctor, school, store, employment, and a market for produce, the response was the same: 'We are willing to suffer all these things. All we want is to be left in peace with our land'. It is hardly surprising that, in his exasperation, he told one group of his 'disappointment with their stupidity' and threatened another with

punishment for shaming his 'important Chief, the Chief of the Empire'.⁵⁴

For their part, the Banabans freely admitted that their demand of '£5 per car' was, in fact, a refusal to sell. After six weeks of fruitless talks Grimble reported:

With great politeness it was conveyed to me that the natives are as tired of the sound of 10½d. as I am of the sound of '£5 per car' and that the opinion is gaining ground that the Administration refuses to admit the right of the owners to have anything to say at all.⁵⁵

The latter point, on which the Banabans had no hard information, was however a shrewd appraisal of the direction of official thinking. Having been forced to admit the total unacceptability to the Banabans of the suggested terms, Grimble suggested a slight increase in an attempt to resolve the issue. However, the Colonial Office was impatient with the delay and, under pressure from the BPC and from the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, began to favour compulsory acquisition and suggested that 'The need of the Empire for the supplies of phosphate may necessitate the taking of steps to make more land available for mining'.⁵⁶ The Banabans rejected a final ultimatum in December 1927 and, by legislation, were deprived of the same rights that the Duke of Devonshire, Secretary of State for the Colonies in the previous Baldwin Government, had so emphatically defined on their behalf just five years before.

Continued Banaban opposition was based in part on a deep-seated dislike and distrust of the BPC, but attitudes to the land itself were still of primary importance and given an added edge by the knowledge that any further alienation must lead to their eventual removal from the island. Rotan Tito was still the most prominent of the Banaban spokesmen but he and his fellow leaders came to place increasing reliance on the support given to them by the women of the community. As early as 1923 McClure had observed:

... it is the young men who appear to express the opinions of the majority. But behind them and most formidable of all is the feminine influence on which everything depends and which is entirely reactionary.⁵⁷

Grimble found this to be only too true and at Buakonikai village, where their influence was greatest, opposition was 'massive and abiding'. He reported:

Women, especially owners within the proposed new area, arbitrarily and blindly opposed at present to transfer of land under any conditions whatever.⁵⁸

Later, when the BPC tried to take possession of its compulsorily acquired lands, it was the women who clung to the trees in an attempt to prevent them being destroyed.

The reasons for this strong feminine influence are not altogether

clear. By this time, largely as a consequence of mission influence, there were women's social groups in all villages and these, as recognised entities, met Grimble and BPC officials to discuss the land issue. It may have been thought by the Banaban community at large that to run counter to government wishes was a hazardous course of action and that women might be less vulnerable to coercion or reprisal. Or, and more probably, women represented the conservative element within the community; they had not, in most cases, worked in the phosphate industry as many of their menfolk had done, few had any formal education, but all were landowners with clear and recognised rights to speak and act on their own behalf in any matters affecting their property.

At the end of 1927, negotiations were abandoned. Of the 153 affected landowners, 62 held out for £5 per car, 79 were prepared to lease their lands on various terms, and 12 abstained from expressing any preference. Of those willing to part with their lands, however, only 5 would do so on the BPC's terms while two-thirds wanted payments and royalties that were more than double those offered by the BPC.⁵⁹

Under the Mining Ordinance of 1928, land could be placed at the disposal of the holder of a mining licence when agreement could not be reached with the owners of the land, provided the Resident Commissioner was satisfied as to the fairness of the terms being offered. In making application under the Ordinance, the BPC made a revised offer which, in the light of a projected increase in annual production from 300 000 to 400 000 tons, meant a substantial lowering of payments to the Banabans: royalties would be reduced by some £3000 a year; the BPC would contribute £15 000 less to the proposed Provident Fund; and, by a reallocation of royalties, the £175 000 target for the fund, leading to a reduction of one-third in the royalties, would be reached several years earlier than expected. Surprisingly, given the projected increase in production, Grimble agreed to these changes on the grounds that the short-term interests of the Banabans (protection against a cessation of mining) would best be served in this way. After H.H. Vaskess, Secretary to the Western Pacific High Commission, showed the implications of the new offer, the High Commissioner tried to salvage the situation but the £15 000 payment to the provident fund could not be saved and was conceded in negotiations between the BPC and the Colonial Office.

The Banabans, unwilling to accept the reality of the settlement, resisted the BPC's attempts to take possession of the land. Under the Ordinance, royalties were fixed by the Crown but there was provision for an appeal to arbitration over the price for land and any improvements thereon. The BPC nominated H.B. Maynard, of its Ocean Island staff, as its arbitrator while J.S. Neill, Agent and Consul for Tonga, was nominated by the High Commissioner to act for the Banabans. During the hearings, which confirmed the BPC offer (which Neill thought to be excessive), the Banabans adopted an

approach which on one hand tried to reject the whole concept of the Mining Ordinance and yet, on the other, accepted the inevitability of events to the point of trying to get as much as possible for their land and trees.⁶⁰

In July 1931 the Banabans were again emphatically told by Sir Murchison Fletcher, the High Commissioner, that their land rights amounted to surface rights only and that all mineral rights were vested in the Crown. Despite this, the Banabans still refused to accept the finality of the arbitration.⁶¹ Convinced that their land had been taken by the BPC, Grimble and other High Commission officials acting in collusion and without the knowledge of the British Government, Rotan Tito addressed a petition directly to the Secretary of State in August 1932. As well as rehearsing the idea of a conspiracy, Rotan asserted that in 1913 Eliot had given an undertaking that the limits of alienation had been reached and protested, as well, at the acquisition of further land when the BPC held reserves sufficient to last at least a decade. The appeal was made 'in front' of God and the King and in the name of 'Your Lordship's most pitiable people, the Banaban community'.⁶² It may or may not have been significant that the sending of the petition coincided with the final departure of Grimble on leave to England and thence to greener pastures in the West Indies and the Seychelles.

But the petition was a final gesture in which even its drafters had little hope; before a reply had been received the Banabans, faced with the BPC's occupation of their lands, finally bowed to the inevitable. Even Rotan Tito accepted employment with the BPC and helped to plot the boundaries within the newly acquired area. And when Grimble's successor, J.C. Barley, arrived in June 1934 and brought no new word, Rotan, on behalf of the Banabans, told him that

...although the landowners of Banaba dispossessed by the recent lease agreement with the British Phosphate Commissioners were heart-broken at the loss of their ancestral lands, they were prepared, nevertheless, thenceforth to accept loyally the decision of the Secretary of State as representing the will of His Majesty the King.⁶³

The only issue left to be resolved was the distribution of the payments made for land and phosphate. Because land was inalienable, and held only in trust for a lifetime, payments for land surrendered under the Ordinance were held to be land-equivalents held in trust for future generations with interest being paid to current owners. The Banaban Provident Fund, intended for the purchase of a future home, took 2d of the combined 10½d royalty, leaving 8½d to be paid into the Banaban Royalties Trust Fund on behalf of the whole community. The Banabans, with their heritage of individualised ownership of property, rejected this concept, as they rejected that which restricted land rights to the surface, and demanded a distribution on the basis of the size and value of individual land holdings — a principle later

adopted by the Nauruans. After negotiations lasting from 1931 to 1937, it was agreed to meet from the Fund the cost of social services, as had been done in the past, and to inaugurate annuities for all Banabans at the rate of £8 for adults and £4 for children. Annuities were also to be paid to landowners according to the extent of their alienated lands, but it was an unequal distribution loaded against those with the largest holdings. Only Rotan Tito and his family refused to accept this compromise, which was given legislative sanction in 1937, but as Rotan's family were the richest landowners on Ocean Island their opposition was hardly surprising.⁶⁴ And even if some observers, particularly officials, saw his overall leadership as being actuated by self interest related to these large land-holdings, the Banabans certainly did not. As he had been their acknowledged leader for the previous fifteen years, so he continued for the next thirty-five, and then assumed the role of elder statesman and passed the mantle of active leadership to his sons.

In retrospect, there is distinct inevitability to be seen in events on Ocean Island between 1900 and 1942. With one-fifth of the island unproductive, and the remaining four-fifths composed of a solid layer of high-quality phosphate, there was little prospect that such a resource would remain unexploited under any colonial regime of the day or, indeed, under the government of any independent nation. What might have been varied, however, were the terms and conditions under which the mining did take place. It is clear that even in official circles there were always advocates for the Banaban cause, and trenchant critics of the mining agencies. On occasions Banaban interests were held to be paramount; on others, they were sacrificed to the 'greater good' of the Empire. From 1920, phosphates were supplied to agricultural interests in Australia and New Zealand at prices significantly below world levels.

Faced with powerful commercial enterprise and a Colonial Office sympathetic to its welfare, officials at Ocean Island or in Suva could do no more than win minor concessions in terms that were, for the most part, decided in London. Arthur Grimble was the instrument of imperial policy, but he was a willing instrument. For his own reasons he wanted an early settlement of the land issue but he also believed in the equity of the offer made by the BPC. His, perhaps, was the dilemma of pre-war colonialism: it was implicit in his office as well as his personality that he knew the Banabans' interests better than the Banabans themselves. It is interesting that though the Banabans rejected Grimble and other officials who were seen as having acted against Banaban interests, they kept most of their bitterness for the BPC. At no stage did they try to repudiate their colonial status; to the King and to the Empire they remained loyal and this they demonstrated with payments to war funds of £1000 in 1914, and £12 500 in 1940.

In 1941 the Second World War reached the Pacific Islands. By the time that Japanese troops occupied Ocean Island in 1942, most European personnel had been withdrawn. After a period of forced labour, a shortage of food on the island led to the removal of many Banabans to Kusaie in the Caroline Islands while others were sent to the Gilberts. The destruction that occurred during the war years made an early return to the island impossible and this, combined with the demoralisation caused by hardship, high mortality, and the scattering of families during the occupation made it easier for the Banabans to accept resettlement on Rabi, in Fiji, which had been bought with £25 000 from Banaban funds in 1942.

After the war, with the Banabans on Rabi and the Colony headquarters moved back to Tarawa, the BPC, except for a token official presence, came into undisputed possession of Ocean Island. The industry continued to provide half the Colony's revenue. The Government's right to tax the industry for the benefit of the whole Colony, and to set the levels of that taxation, which had been resisted, even denied, before the war was now admitted, but often with reluctance. For many years the BPC, with resources and influence far outweighing those of the Colony, continued to dominate the relationship between them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Imperial policy and the phosphate industry

The British Empire was not a charitable organisation. In all but the most exceptional of cases, dependencies were obliged to pay their own way, and more; they were expected to make some positive contribution to the well-being of Britain and its imperial partners. It was also supposed that resources should be developed by private enterprise, preferably British, and that private investment should generate both the demand and funds for social development. But in practice few colonies were industrialised. Most became providers of raw materials, extracted or produced for processing in Europe, and in return they bought the end-products of Western technology. Thus in the early years of the 20th century there were no fixed expectations for government activity in colonial dependencies; rather, each was restricted to the levels of administration and services that it could afford, and the interest shown in dependencies from London was directly proportionate to their imperial contribution and to the difficulty and embarrassment that they might cause.

It was to be expected, then, that the Gilbert and Ellice Islands should at first attract little attention and enjoy few services; administration was financed from customs duties and from the King's Tax which was usually collected in copra. Except at Ocean Island there were no medical services until 1904; there was no government ship until 1909, no government contribution to schools until 1913. The Pacific Islands Company was permitted to make its own arrangements with the Banabans for the mining of phosphate from Ocean Island and the annual fee charged for the privilege, a princely £50, was paid to imperial rather than local revenue. It was not until 1908, when the British Government had been made uneasy by public criticism of the methods and profits of the Company, that the Colonial Office agreed that the royalty of 6d per ton (which had replaced the licence fee) should be paid to Protectorate funds. At the same time the office of the Resident Commissioner was moved to Ocean Island. The Company at first resisted the interference in its affairs represented by this official presence but then found itself so dependent on the Resident Commissioner in its dealings with its own employees and with the Banabans that both the Company and its successor, the British Phosphate Commission, strenuously resisted any suggestion that wider interests might be served by moving the headquarters back to Tarawa.

After the departure of William Telfer Campbell in 1909, the

Company had to deal with Captain John Quayle Dickson, DSO, a 'haughty old man from the Veldt' as one of his subordinates called him, who was nearing the end of an undistinguished career when he reached Ocean Island in 1909.¹ His espousal of the Banaban cause annoyed the Company and embarrassed the Colonial Office but it was his administrative incompetence and total ineptitude in matters of finance that attracted the most severe criticism. He kept the touring vessel, the *Tokelau*, at Ocean Island and, being a bad sailor himself, used it only to bring his District Magistrates to Ocean Island for consultations.² In 1912 he more than doubled the King's Tax because he believed that the Islanders could afford to pay and the increase would make them more industrious; so slow were communications with the Protectorate that the new taxes had all been collected before Sir Henry May, the High Commissioner, was able to tell him that the increase could not be authorised. May complained to the Colonial Office of 'the incapacity of the Resident Commissioner to deal intelligently with business matters' and 'his obstinate disregard of his instructions'.³ But this was only a beginning. May had scarcely ordered a tax adjustment when the auditors found that the new Residency at Ocean Island had been furnished on a truly gubernatorial scale complete with piano and croquet set. One senior official in the Colonial Office was moved to censure Dickson as 'an impossible officer, financially and otherwise, especially financially' but another, more charitable, was moved to pity rather than anger: 'in a dog's hole like Ocean Island I wd let him have a croquet set. It does not wear out quickly and could be left for his successor'.⁴ Nor was the successor long in coming. Irritated beyond endurance the Secretary of State expressed his 'grave displeasure' with Dickson's administration in June 1912 and six months later authorised his transfer to the position of Colonial Secretary of the Falkland Islands.⁵ The Pacific Phosphate Company perhaps created, and certainly perpetuated the myth that Dickson had been removed solely because of his opposition to the Company's attempts to acquire land from the Banabans. Ellis boasted in this vein to E.C. Eliot, Dickson's successor, and Grimble based his attitude to the 1928 negotiations in part on the assumed fate of Dickson but, in fact, the Colonial Office had continued to take seriously Dickson's criticisms of the Company even after he had been dismissed.⁶

Before the appointment of Eliot in 1913 the Company took very little notice of Protectorate officials and preferred to rely upon its influential London Directors, among them Lord Stanmore and Lord Balfour of Burleigh, to plead its case directly with the Colonial Office. Thus the Company invoked official pressure upon the Banabans in the name of the benefits to Empire of its activities and, in 1908, it succeeded in having the capitation tax on its 'non-Native' employees removed. It was less a measure of financial necessity than of official concern at the degree to which the Company had been able to impose its will upon the Colonial Office that led to the tax being reimposed

two years later.⁷ This heightened sensitivity to the Company's affairs made the Colonial Office rather more sympathetic to recommendations from the High Commissioner for the more effective administration of the other islands under the jurisdiction of the Resident Commissioner. The numbers of permanent officials were increased, and a vessel purchased, but there was little concern with the provision of social services. The emphasis was on efficiency, and on orderly government; the Protectorate was able to accumulate a surplus not because of high taxation on Islanders and on the phosphate industry (indeed, it was modest in both cases), but because the scope of government was so limited.

While this policy of minimal development could be justified by the islands' protectorate status, this was not so after annexation had taken place in 1916. And while official publications subsequently suggested that this new status had led to the better administration of the islands, there were few discernible changes in either the policies or practice of government.⁸ The belief that the Islanders themselves had sought closer ties with Britain, and had offered to cede their islands to the Crown, also became enshrined in the mythology of the new colony. True, the island governments had signed requests, in English, that had been put before them, but the initiative for annexation came from London. As early as 1912 Quayle Dickson had been asked to seek an offer of cession from the island governments but he, in his obsession, used the 'distrust and suspicion' caused by the activities of the Pacific Phosphate Company, and other minor issues concerning land, taxation and the Native Laws to postpone any further discussion. As no further action was taken for a year (during which time Eliot secured the Banabans' agreement to the extension of mining areas) and it was a further two years before annexation was finalised, it is evident that the Colonial Office did not see the matter as urgent. Rather, it had been made sensitive by criticism of the phosphate industry and Campbell's administration and wished to remove the irregularity of having a single administration for two protectorates and a British settlement, and to make more easily justifiable in the long term its practice of taxing the latter for the benefit of the former. Having given appropriate guarantees on the continuance of the existing laws and island governments, and on the future protection of land rights, Britain annexed the Gilbert and Ellice Islands on 12 January 1916; later in the same year Ocean, Fanning, Washington and the Tokelau (Union) Islands were also incorporated within its boundaries, as was Christmas Island in 1919 and most of the Phoenix Islands in 1937.⁹ The notion of an Advisory Council to the Resident Commissioner, to be composed of officials with representatives of commerce and the phosphate industry in occasional attendance, was only briefly considered. Such a council was the norm in British possessions at this time but in the case of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony was thought to be unwarranted because of transport difficulties and the limited nature of expatriate commercial enterprise.¹⁰

In these years the transfer of the Resident Commissioner's office was a more important determinant of policy than was annexation. From 1906, when he had visited the Protectorate, im Thurn began to take seriously Campbell's plans for administrative reorganisation. He urged upon the Colonial Office a scheme which included the removal of Campbell to Ocean Island; his replacement at Tarawa by an Assistant Resident Commissioner; and the appointment to the permanent staff of Campbell's Government Agents, later known as District Magistrates and, after annexation, District Officers. To widen the scope of government activity, and to increase its effectiveness, a vessel was also to be purchased.¹¹

This latter step, seen as desirable from the 1890s, was made essential by the addition of the Tokelau Islands to the Resident Commissioner's responsibilities in 1909. At first, contact between the District Magistrate and the Resident Commissioner depended on an irregular trading service between Samoa and the Ellice Islands via the Tokelau (1000 km to the east of Funafuti) and thence via an even more irregular service through Tarawa to Ocean Island. The only officer to serve in the Tokelau Islands for any length of time was Roderick MacDermot who had been employed as a Government Agent in the Gilberts from 1904 and was transferred to the Tokelau in 1909. It was hardly the most prized position in the Protectorate and it was not long before MacDermot made clear his dissatisfaction:

No more books are required here at present [he wrote to Dickson in 1912], and the less Protectorate property sent the better until some provision is made to accommodate it. The one room which I could afford myself, built largely by the sweat of my own brow. . . besides being my dining, sitting, sleeping room, a repository for my personal effects, has also become the only place at my disposal for carrying on official work, and for storing the various departmental paraphernalia you send along.¹²

After nearly four years MacDermot could report that the villages on all three islands — Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu — had been rebuilt even if there were few other manifestations of the government presence.¹³ Some improvement was effected by making the District Magistrate directly responsible to the High Commissioner but after MacDermot's departure in 1913, the Tokelauans again came under the control of their priests and pastors except during occasional and brief official visits.

For the duration of the First World War the new Colony was scarcely noticed: secure in the possession of plentiful mining lands the Pacific Phosphate Company enjoyed a quiet prosperity despite reduced exports; the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders contributed generously to the Prince of Wales Relief Fund; and, when the armistice was declared, a police contingent accepted for service with Maori troops was still in camp in New Zealand awaiting a

consignment of oversize boots for their coral-hardened feet.

Where the war had left the Colony largely untouched beyond the minor inconvenience of staff and shipping shortages, the peace was to be of profound importance. At Versailles the future of Nauru, close to Ocean Island and even richer in phosphate, was the subject of heated debate with Australia determined to hold what its troops had seized from the Germans and neither the United Kingdom nor New Zealand prepared to allow it monopolistic control. All were agreed, however, that the phosphate industry should come under government control and that the profits from Nauru should accrue to the farmers of the Empire rather than to the shareholders of the Pacific Phosphate Company. The latter bowed out gracefully at both Ocean Island and Nauru and accepted £3 500 000 in compensation—about £3 000 000 of it in respect of potential profits and £500 000 for plant and machinery. Under a tripartite agreement effective from June 1920, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand—with shares of 42 per cent and 16 per cent respectively—assumed control of the industry through the British Phosphate Commissioners.¹⁴ Most of the Company's staff were taken over by the BPC; Albert Ellis, Travelling Director, became the New Zealand Commissioner and Alwin Dickinson, the Managing Director, his colleague from the United Kingdom.

There were other continuities. Whereas the Company had tried to produce phosphate as cheaply as possible to maximise returns, the BPC did so to cut farmers' costs. Within a decade the elimination of profits and increased efficiency through mechanisation had halved the price of phosphate delivered to Australia and New Zealand. In keeping with the refurbished image, the 'struggling agriculturalists' of the Empire began to figure prominently in the rhetoric of the Commissioners. And the industry now had an even more direct line to the Colonial Office than it had enjoyed in Stanmore's time, an advantage that it exploited in seeking a reduction of taxes at Ocean Island. When, for example, a meeting with the High Commissioner in June 1921 failed to secure the desired abolition of import duty on fuel oil and other concessions, the Governments of Australia and New Zealand were persuaded to urge the BPC's viewpoint upon the Colonial Office.¹⁵ And, in arguing their case, the Commissioners, in a style reminiscent of the Company which two of their number had served, contrived to double their supposed contribution to the revenue of the Colony by including in their estimates all gross payments including contributions to the Banaban Fund, the estates of deceased workers, and costs that were recoverable from employees or through the Company store.¹⁶ In 1921-2, the second year of its operation, the BPC further reduced its price to farmers, covered all costs, established reserve funds against every possible contingency, showed a surplus in excess of £200 000 from a gross revenue of a little over £1 200 000 and still complained that it was over-taxed.¹⁷ The basic position adopted by the BPC was that royalties and taxes paid to the Colony should not

exceed the £10 000 paid at Nauru and that it should only be required to meet the costs of administration at Ocean Island and not to subsidise the 'productive' Gilbert and Ellice groups. The government position, adopted in 1920 and constantly maintained afterwards, was that Ocean Island was but 'one portion of a fairly extensive little Colony' and could legitimately be taxed for the benefit of the whole.¹⁸

The BPC was not immediately relieved of its tax burden but the notion that the administration of the Colony was unnecessarily large and expensive seemed to take root in the Colonial Office and, rather than impose additional taxes on the phosphate industry as had been suggested in 1921 by T.E. Fell, the Acting High Commissioner, it was decided to embark upon a policy of cutting expenditure. After scrutinising the Estimates for 1923-4 Sir Cecil Rodwell, the High Commissioner, agreed with the Colonial Office that the situation called for retrenchment. Specifically, it was decided to dispense with two of the five District Officers and to make one of those remaining a Travelling Commissioner; the alternative, the Colonial Office suggested, was to sell the *Tokelau*. These decisions were reached at a time when, for a population of 30 000 people, the Colony's annual revenue was in the vicinity of £50 000, expenditure was held at £40 000 and reserve funds were sufficient to cover more than a year's expenditure. The Colonial Office paid lip service to the difficulty of administering so many scattered islands but then made even more savage cuts than had been expected. The establishment was reduced and the Colony's ship, the only regular means of communication between Ocean Island and the Gilbert and Ellice groups, was sold as well.¹⁹ District Officers could now visit the more remote islands only once or twice a year and then by grace and favour of the few trading firms or on the recruiting vessels of the BPC.

In the early years of mining the Pacific Phosphate Company had relied heavily upon Gilbertese labourers, a thousand of whom were employed by 1905, with Ellice Islanders as boatmen and Japanese mechanics. Later, Japanese labourers were also employed but, under an agreement with the Government, their numbers were held at about 300. After the occupation of the Micronesian islands to the north by Japan at the end of the First World War, the Japanese Government concentrated its surplus labour in that area and the BPC recruited 500 Chinese labourers through Hong Kong. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the total labour force at Ocean Island ranged between 1200 and 1500 with fluctuating proportions of Gilbertese and Chinese depending on recruiting conditions in the Gilberts (determined largely by drought and the price of copra) and the level of capitation tax levied by the Government on non-Natives.²⁰

Living conditions on Ocean Island were seldom criticised by either officials or the employees themselves but the industry's wages policy was the cause of frequent disputes. It was surprising, perhaps, but consistent with the approach of both the Company and the Commission that they were most parsimonious at times when the

industry was enjoying boom years. Minor disputes were common enough but all major disruptions were caused either by friction among the various races in the workforce or by some attempt by the industry to change working conditions unilaterally. For example there were strikes of Gilbertese in 1911 over altered working hours, and in 1916 over a decision, subsequently revoked, to reduce wages for incoming labourers; by Japanese in 1919 when they won a 20 per cent wage increase because of price rises in the Company's very profitable store; and by Chinese in 1931 over the early repatriation of 250 labourers.²¹

As well as being the most litigious group among the labourers, the Chinese also introduced a new element of violence to the island both within the Chinese community and in clashes, sometimes of riot proportions, between Gilbertese and Chinese. Attempts were made with fences and regulations to keep the races apart, but with little effect. Within days of the arrival of the first contingent of Chinese in 1920, for example, Grimble reported that they had a 'decided tendency to purloin coconuts and other fruits belonging to the Banaban natives'.²² A few months later an incident arising from a Chinese washing his clothes in drinking water set aside for Gilbertese soon escalated into a general Chinese attack on Gilbertese labourers, retaliatory stoning of Chinese by Gilbertese and a full-scale riot after which weapons ranging from nail-studded pieces of timber to broken bottles were seized by the police.²³

By November 1925, when the Chinese launched another major attack on the Gilbertese, their arsenal had widened to include revolvers, spears of various descriptions, and bombs made from gelignite and broken glass encased in tins and bottles. The occasion for the attack was a scuffle between two labourers but the speed with which the Chinese mobilised indicated thorough planning, strongly-felt grievances and a deep-rooted antipathy between Chinese and Gilbertese. After the initial incident a massed assault on the Gilbertese compound was driven back; later in the day a further attack by more than 300 Chinese ended with the police and Europeans employed by the Government and the BPC keeping the simmering mobs apart and, they believed, preventing a 'massacre of Asiatics'. For two weeks Arthur Grimble, then acting as Resident Commissioner, managed to maintain an uneasy peace until HMS *Laburnum* arrived with marines to search the Chinese compound for weapons and to supervise the repatriation of time-expired Chinese labourers and the landing of their replacements. Also on board was Roger Pilling, Secretary to the Western Pacific High Commission, who had been sent to enquire into the disturbance.

Pilling's findings reflected little credit on either the BPC or the Government but they were sufficiently complimentary of Grimble's handling of the disturbance itself for him to be confirmed in the position of Resident Commissioner. The degree to which the BPC had become a power unto itself, and the way in which the Government had abdicated its responsibilities, were immediately evident. The High

Commissioner, in his capacity as Governor of Fiji, had oversight of a large Indian population, most of which had been brought to Fiji under an indenture system in which the recruiting and transport of labourers was conducted under government supervision and the conditions of employment were also controlled by Government. Even after the ending of the indenture system in 1920, the Government of India remained a vigilant guardian of its emigrants' interests. There was no such protection for the Chinese recruited through Hong Kong. They were subjected to medical but not police checks, the only labour inspector at Ocean Island was employed by the BPC and the sole interpreter, also employed by the BPC, was unable to translate even simple questions asked at the enquiry. Many of the labour regulations had been ignored by the Government and the BPC because each considered that their enforcement was the responsibility of the other. The BPC had been the victim of disturbances in China which had affected recruiting and shipping but it was always inclined to extend or curtail contracts for its own convenience. Just before the riot it had failed to supply special food and clothing promised as part of the conditions of employment. For its part, the Government seemed to consider that a police force of sixteen constables and three NCOs was sufficient for the control of a multi-racial labour force of more than a thousand men. Except for providing nominal night patrols, supervising prisoners, and providing judicial facilities, the Government left labour management and conditions largely in the hands of the BPC.

Basic to the whole issue was the presence of such large Gilbertese and Chinese communities in an environment that had few outlets for recreation. From the BPC's point of view, Chinese labour was preferable to Pacific Islanders. For the Nauru operation, the entire labour force had been recruited from Hong Kong once Japan had ended recruiting in Micronesia but there the BPC had been permitted by the Australian Government to continue under the German labour code which had a number of penal clauses. The British Government was not prepared to sanction the recruiting of Chinese labour elsewhere in the Pacific but at Ocean Island, where the economic benefits were much greater and the islands more remote, an exception was made. But the BPC could not win on all fronts; its attempts to introduce penal provisions at Ocean Island were steadfastly resisted. Until the 1930s the Government also asked that there should be no more than one Chinese for every two Gilbertese and secured compliance by its manipulation of the capitation tax. From the Government's point of view the industry relieved population pressure in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands while giving a much needed boost to village economies. The Company accepted that the Gilbertese were good workers, even if not capable of performing the work entrusted to mechanics, but it also found that they were capricious in the extreme, quick to take offence and likely to cause trouble with their boisterous practical joking at the expense of the Chinese. Also unpopular with the BPC because of the costs involved, was the Government's

insistence that one-third of the Gilbertese should be accompanied by their wives. But the antipathy between the races had more profound origins than pilfering and practical joking: to the Chinese, the Gilbertese were ignorant savages with a culture, if it could be called such, bereft of any redeeming quality; the Gilbertese, on the other hand, bitterly resented the condescension of the Chinese and, quick to judge on physical attributes, scorned these puny men who might be skilled but who lacked strength. There was also resentment at Chinese attempts to seduce Gilbertese women and the Chinese habit of wandering ('spying') through the Gilbertese compound and, contrary to Gilbertese custom, talking to the womenfolk in the absence of their husbands.²⁴

As a result of the incident, regulations were more strictly enforced, compounds were fenced, and a rigorous policy of segregation imposed. There were no further race riots but, in the absence of penal provisions, there were continual irritants to the BPC especially in the form of absenteeism after pay-day when gambling offered the possibility of greater rewards than the loading of four tons of phosphate per day. The BPC was more conscious of labour issues in the late 1920s but it was still left to the Government to cope with the consequences of BPC mismanagement. In 1931, for example, the BPC decided to terminate the contracts of 250 Chinese labourers several months before they were due to expire because of the imminent arrival of a fresh contingent from Hong Kong. Those affected resented the loss of earnings and made issue over the retention of a few of their number due to appear as witnesses in a court action. The rumour spread that one of this latter group, already unpopular because of his earlier assault on a prominent leader among the Chinese, was a police spy and, at a mass-meeting attended by over 600 Chinese labourers, he was sentenced to death by beating. Again it fell to Arthur Grimble, alone and unarmed, to face the unruly mob and later, with the help of a small group of police, to secure the release of the prisoner.²⁵

In all these incidents the BPC's failure to develop a suitable labour policy was partly responsible for the violence that occurred but, because the BPC refused to admit any culpability, it tended to take only those remedial steps insisted upon by the Colonial Office. There was a distinct reluctance to look beyond physical living conditions—by contemporary standards very good—into the racial and cultural issues which were a more fundamental cause of discontent. Nor was the Colony Government capable of imposing its will upon the BPC. Among the officials of the day, only former employees of the BPC had any experience of dealing with migrant labour. Thus no one was equipped to come to grips with the labour question and, without the support of the High Commissioner or the Colonial Office, the monolithic presence of the BPC effectively curtailed any initiatives from the Colony Government.

The BPC had soon learned the extent of its power and did not

hesitate to use it in seeking tax relief as it had done in determining labour policies, and in securing Banaban lands. In anticipation of a demand for reduced taxation payments Grimble and Fletcher, the High Commissioner, fired the opening rounds in a four-year campaign in March 1930 when they tried to convince the Colonial Office that expenditure in the Colony was being held at a minimum, that improvements in administration and social services were not only desirable but essential, and that the BPC could well afford the £27 000 it contributed annually towards the Colony's total revenue of £55 000. What Grimble sought was security for the Colony's revenues in the light of a reduced phosphate market caused by a world-wide depression and the knowledge that this lower demand could be met from Nauru where the sum of royalties and taxes was about one-quarter of that payable at Ocean Island.²⁶ The idea of a commuted taxation agreement had been mooted before but as a serious proposition it emerged from discussions in Suva between Fletcher, Grimble and the British Commissioner in September 1930. The Government was not overly ambitious, seeking merely to preserve its revenues from the industry at existing levels, with the prospect of a bonus should production increase above the depression level of 200 000 tons a year.

At first the BPC would not be drawn except on terms so obviously to its own advantage that they were rejected out of hand. Then, in discussions between the Commissioners and Fletcher in July 1932, substantial progress was made towards a settlement. The BPC recited a catalogue of long-standing grievances: taxes were so much higher at Ocean Island than Nauru; Ocean Island should not be taxed for the benefit of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands; it was unprincipled, perhaps illegal, for Britain as one of the BPC partner governments to seize additional profits in form of taxes; the Colony's reserves of £110 000 were unnecessarily high and had been accumulated at the expense of the BPC; taxation levels had increased dramatically since the late 1920s. The High Commissioner gave the standard replies: Ocean Island was part of the Colony and could be taxed as such; the reserves had been accumulated by careful management and efficient government; the incidence of taxation had not increased since 1923, and had actually decreased in 1925; the BPC had paid more in recent years largely because of import duties payable on equipment for mechanisation which gave a greater return on investment. He conceded that reserves of £100 000 were probably adequate.

With this ritualised recitation by both sides completed, more serious negotiations began. Eventually the BPC agreed to meet the shortfall between revenue from non-BPC sources and approved expenditure; in other words, to balance the Colony's budget. The 6d per ton royalty charged under the terms of the licence first issued to the Pacific Phosphate Company was to continue but the BPC was exempted from all other taxes and licence fees and from customs duties on all goods except tobacco and liquor. The agreement was to run for five years

with either party having the right to seek termination or review after three.²⁷

From the Colony's point of view, the agreement was a disaster. The BPC took immediate advantage of the removal of the capitation tax to replace Gilbertese labourers with Chinese and thus further lowered cash incomes already depressed by poor copra returns. And, even more seriously, phosphate exports doubled to reach 400 000 tons a year by 1937 while the BPC's contribution to revenue, about £25 000 a year, was significantly less than it had been paying before the agreement had been introduced. It had been understood that the BPC would be consulted on the draft Estimates each year but that the final decisions, as before, would rest with the Secretary of State working through the High Commissioner and the Resident Commissioner. But the BPC, anxious that no upper limit to its contribution had been set and fearful that it might have given the Government a blank cheque, adopted a much more active role than had been expected. When the agreement was due for review in 1937 the newly arrived High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Richards, voiced concern at the extent to which the Government had lost all initiative in controlling the finances of the Colony:

I may say at the outset that, so far as I can see, the agreement has not worked out as was apparently expected by the Administration, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that far too much deference has been accorded to the views of the Commissioners in the matter of Government expenditure. I imagine that the intention was that the annual draft Estimates of the Colony should be placed before the Commissioners for their views and any representations they might wish to make on the general financial effect...

In actual practice the Commissioners assumed a right to criticise every item of expenditure, and, no doubt encouraged by the conciliatory attitude of the Administration, took full advantage of the position, extended their criticism to all Government activities, and instituted a campaign of Government economy. A development that appears not to have been contemplated when the agreement was negotiated, was the insistence of the Commissioners that items of expenditure to which they objected should be met from surplus funds.²⁸

The main target for Richards' criticism was J.C. Barley who had succeeded Grimble as Resident Commissioner in 1933. Barley's experience had been mostly in district administration in the Solomon Islands and he was lost in central government. Certainly on financial matters he was no match for Maynard, the BPC's Ocean Island Manager, nor for the Commissioners themselves who made more or less annual visits to the island. Unsure of himself, and unwilling to offend his superiors, Barley vacillated on all major decisions and capitulated locally to the BPC. He was, Richards rather savagely observed, 'somewhat afraid of the Phosphate Commission and determined to be their most obedient, humble servant.'²⁹ While all this

was true, and the Colony was certainly in the bondage of the BPC at this time, other factors were involved and Barley was to some extent being made a scapegoat for the deficiencies of others. After all, both the High Commissioner and the Colonial Office had been involved in the original negotiations over commuted taxation and had approved of the terms of the agreement; both had subsequently seen and approved the annual Estimates. Moreover the 1928 Banaban land settlement and, indeed, the taxation agreement itself, were ample testimony to the influence of the BPC at the Colonial Office and undue resistance must have appeared to be an exercise in futility. But there were other reasons—decisive in his being forced to resign in 1941—which helped to account for Barley's unpopularity with his superiors: his indecision crippled the administration, he was a tippler, and because of the nature and extent of his fraternisation with Islanders during his twenty-one years in the Solomons as well as in the Gilberts he was considered to have 'gone native' to a degree unacceptable in a colonial servant.³⁰ His real interest was in 'Native Administration'. He was much less authoritarian in his approach than any of his predecessors since Swayne and in this regard his arrival, and the reforms initiated under his leadership, mark a real turning point in the history of the Colony. But even here, while Barley was prepared to accede to change, the ideas came from younger officers who pressed upon him the need for reform.

The turning point in High Commission attitudes to the Colony came with the appointment of Sir Arthur Richards in 1936. Fletcher had tried to make some improvements but Richards was much more aware of developments elsewhere in the Empire and had a more acute perception of their implications for even the remote dependencies of the Western Pacific. Both he and Sir Harry Luke, High Commissioner from 1938 to 1942, tried with mixed success to establish paramountcy over the BPC, both urged the removal of Colony headquarters to the Gilberts that the interests of Islanders might be better served, and they recognised that the provision of social services could not wait for an economic miracle. Here, at least, there was some hope of reform in the wake of a revised colonial policy. It was at this time that Britain was faced with riots in the West Indies and it responded in 1940 with the Colonial Development and Welfare Act which marked the beginnings of significant aid grants from Britain to her colonies.

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands did not see any benefit from that scheme until after the war but in the short term Richards was able to exact an additional £10 000 a year from the BPC and to remove the BPC veto on expenditure during the 1938 renegotiation of the commuted taxation agreement.³¹ But this amount was needed simply to preserve existing services and allowed no margin for new developments. Luke, after his first tour of the Colony, was scathing in his indictment of half a century of colonial rule:

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands are at present a tragedy, though

that is not a condition which need by any means be perpetuated... Why the natives are as patient and loyal as they are I cannot understand, for I have never encountered an Administration that does less for its ressortissants. This is of course due largely to the appalling penury that immobilizes both administrative and medical officers in a Colony where transport facilities are of paramount importance... As for the wretched District Officers, they have to get about (when they can do so at all) by cadging lifts from chance trading or mission vessels, and naturally have to fit their itineraries and the time of their stay with the requirements of the owners... I realize that to move the headquarters will involve a considerable outlay, but there is little doubt in my mind, any more than there was in the minds of Fletcher and Richards, that the administration can only emerge from its present nerveless and paralyzed condition when the change had been made.³²

The changes that were taking place in Colonial Office thinking were important as part of the background to revised policies for the Colony but there were few immediate signs of improvement. Plans to move the Colony's headquarters, to expand education and health services, and to increase shipping in the interests of improving both social and administrative services were all delayed by the outbreak of the Pacific War. But the people of the Gilbert and Ellice groups, made orphans thirty years before by the phosphate industry, did see some signs that the Government was again taking an interest in their welfare: the restrictive regulations bequeathed by Campbell and refined by Grimble were abandoned; a new Lands Commission made a concerted attempt to reduce the backlog of claims; and H.E. Maude, the Lands Commissioner, toured the islands consulting their leaders on a planned reform of local government structure.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Rigidity and reform: the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, 1909-1941

The removal of Protectorate headquarters from Tarawa in 1908, the difficulties of inter-island communication, and the preoccupation of both colonial servants and their political masters with the phosphate industry, removed the Gilbert and Ellice Islands from the focus of official attention. With time, the administrative system established by Campbell became even less flexible and more authoritarian until, in the 1930s, a new generation of District Officers made the first of many attempts to persuade traditional leaders to accept responsible positions within the island governments. The basic assumptions influencing policies before the Second World War were that the Gilbert and Ellice Islands would remain impoverished and isolated; that while phosphate revenue might buy limited quantities of bread, it would not extend to cake; and that, therefore, development should be circumscribed, aspirations should not be raised, and education should have no greater purpose than to make its graduates better citizens in a limited atoll environment. Protectionism unrelated to any notion of development made for stagnation. The Gilbert and Ellice Islands, together with the other Western Pacific dependencies, became increasingly removed from the realities of changing imperial policies in Asia and Africa.

For a time, while im Thurn remained High Commissioner, it seemed that reforms might be implemented but when changes did take place, it was seldom in the manner expected. For example, when serious planning for the acquisition of a vessel began, a covetous eye was cast upon the Island Funds which had been increasing steadily by about £1000 a year. In 1908 im Thurn suggested that half the cost of the proposed ship might be borrowed from the Funds while the Colonial Office, in a fine demonstration of hair-splitting, argued that the Funds should really not exist at all, that as the ship would be 'clearly for the benefit of the Natives' they should contribute directly to its purchase, and that the possibility of totally absorbing the Funds should also be examined. Accordingly £4500 was 'given', with each island contributing in proportion to its accumulated balance. The Native Governments of the Gilbert Islands voiced no objection but the Ellice Islanders, probably on the prompting of George Smith-Rewse, their District Magistrate, extracted a promise that a development project of some sort would be undertaken in their islands each year. The undertaking was soon forgotten, by the Government if not by the Islanders, but all the islands in Smith-Rewse's charge soon

established, with annual levies and with gifts from those employed overseas, their own private funds for the proverbial rainy day. With little distinction between the sacred and secular in village life, many of these funds were raised by local churches and sometimes spent for their benefit, but always the funds were preserved and with time they multiplied. From 1914, when it absorbed the Island Funds, the Government received all fines and allowed the island governments to keep only those taxes required to meet immediate needs; from 1917 all revenues were assumed by the Government and island administration financed from its budget.¹

The new financial arrangements were part of a move to bring the law into conformity with the reality bequeathed by Campbell. High Chiefs were given token responsibility (to be shared with the Native Magistrates and Chiefs of Kaubure) for the 'good order and cleanliness' of their islands but they were given no specific, formal powers and were no longer regarded as members of the Native Governments. The Native Magistrate was confirmed in his dual administrative and judicial role and in his dominance of the Native Government. The Chief of Kaubure was made deputy to the Magistrate and responsible for the day to day running of the Native Government. And whereas, under the old Native Laws, the sole power formally accorded the Resident Commissioner related to the confirmation of capital punishment, now he and the District Officers were given wide-ranging powers. All Native Magistrates, Chiefs of Kaubure and Scribes were to be appointed; Kaubure were to be elected but subject to confirmation; all decisions of Native Courts (including those concerning land disputes) were subject to review; local regulations made by the Magistrates and Kaubure required the approval of the District Officer.

The laws to be enforced by the Native Governments were also reviewed. Attempted suicide (a common response to perceived shame, public humiliation or unrequited love), abortion, *tinaba*, incest, gambling, sorcery, aiding and abetting, and contempt of court all became punishable offences while Sabbath observance and fornication were dropped from the code. The provision for compensation in cases of theft, adultery, and for having a sexual relationship with another man's fiancée was also discontinued thus finally removing (in all cases except those of wilful damage) the basic principle upon which traditional law codes had rested.²

Encouraged by the attitude of the central government, and secure in the knowledge that their decisions would generally be endorsed by the District Officer, the Magistrates of the Gilbert Islands in particular tended towards the authoritarian and tried to make rules for every conceivable situation. In the 1920s prosecutions and convictions reached absurd proportions; on some islands, in any given year, the equivalent of three-quarters or more of the adult population were found guilty of some breach of the regulations.³ When the Colonial Office, alarmed by this apparent lawlessness, sought an explanation,

Charles Swinbourne, the acting Resident Commissioner, was quick to point out that most convictions concerned the cleanliness, or lack of it, of houses and village land, that because of the pervasive nature of the regulations:

... it is only on islands where the Native Governments are slack in the performance of their duties that any large proportion of the community can escape conviction in the course of any given year. Crime, however, as it is understood in a European sense is seldom committed by the Gilbertese and the community's strong social sense is an efficient safeguard against the occurrence of any offence which the native considers to be anti-social.⁴

By this time, local regulations had been consolidated into a single code by a new Resident Commissioner, Arthur Grimble. Grimble, first appointed as an administrative cadet in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1914, was a gifted amateur linguist and anthropologist, and a man possessed of driving ambition. And while he often regretted or scorned social changes made in the name of civilisation or Christianity, he had an abiding affection for the Gilbertese. Before being appointed Resident Commissioner in 1926, Grimble had spent most of his time at Ocean Island but he had also spent some years as District Officer and Lands Commissioner in the Gilbert group. As a young officer, his chief mentor was George Murdoch and he had absorbed many of the old Scotsman's paternal ideas and autocratic ways. Grimble was a protectionist; he wanted to seal off the Gilbertese from external influences that he might be a fond, if stern, father to his child-like charges. Control would be easier, he believed, if there was conformity to a single law-code and his *Regulations for the Good Order and Cleanliness of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands*, published in 1930, provide a classic statement of the paternalistic nature of the administrative structure that had emerged.

Some of the regulations tried to define traditional standards of behaviour which, if broken, would have provoked community action. The attempt was made, for example, to eliminate the soliciting of goods and services, to control adoptions, to remind parents of their obligations towards their children. The care of aged parents, adoptive parents, dogs, pigs and fowls were also the subject of regulations. Feasts to celebrate marriages, births, deaths, betrothals and puberty could only be held with the permission of a Kaubure. Competitive feasts between families and public feasts for strangers or visitors were forbidden. Public dancing was permitted only on Wednesdays, Saturdays and public holidays between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. All males attending dances were to carry lamps; children could not attend; 'shameful gestures and movements of the body', magic rituals, and 'unclean games' were prohibited. Private dancing practice, with a maximum of four participants, was permitted only on Mondays and Thursdays between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. Eating in a sleeping house, or sleeping in an eating house, was forbidden. Communal labour

obligations were standardised; except for government and some mission personnel, all able-bodied adults were to perform public works for up to fifty-two days each year. All landowners were to work on their lands on Fridays and, between October and March (the off-season for communal works) for a further day each week to clear and replant unproductive lands. A 9 p.m. curfew was imposed. Maximum penalties under the code were a 10s fine or imprisonment for one month.⁵

Law codes of this nature had been common enough under mission-dominated governments in various parts of Oceania in the 19th century, but by the 20th they had all but disappeared with the expanding colonial presence. In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, however, the missions had secured a strong grip on the government of many islands before the Protectorates were established. The administration simply lacked the resources to remove the work of decades and its best, perhaps only, chance of exercising control was to adopt as its own the framework established by the missions.

In Suva, the draft of this code was read with some concern, even disbelief, yet the High Commissioner and his staff bowed to Grimble's superior knowledge of his Colony with little more than token resistance. For example A.K. Young, the Chief Judicial Commissioner, thought many of the regulations to be "Spartan" in character' and 'draconic in their severity' yet recommended only minor changes to the scale of penalties and none to the scope of the code on the grounds that:

Mr Grimble ... is an expert in, and has made a special study of, native law and custom, as well as being conversant with native ideas of right and wrong, and also with the native language: he has prepared the code after long and careful inquiry, no one is a better judge of the need for laws applicable to natives of the nature indicated than he is.⁶

Grimble acknowledged the spartan nature of his code but hardly acknowledged the true situation when he replied:

... all these rules of conduct have been devised by the Native Governments themselves, to meet local exigencies and to suit the peculiar social needs of the people: they have been formulated by natives for the better governance of natives.⁷

The Native Governments were, however, extremely selective in their enforcement of the laws and regulations. They supervised communal works, inspected houses, and enforced the curfew but where the law came into conflict with customary modes of behaviour still held in respect, no action would be taken. Despite the law, life crises were still marked by feasting, the *tinaba* and *eiriki* customs practised, goods and services solicited, and it is doubtful whether the incidence of abortion was significantly reduced. On the other hand, offenders who had committed acts regarded as distinctly anti-social—for example, theft, incest or rape—were often punished by family or community

action without reference to the courts.

As customary law survived in some contexts, so too did traditional authority. On Makin, Butaritari, Abaiang, Abemama, Kuria and Aranuka, high chiefs and their families remained a formidable force in island politics. Having been disregarded and even humiliated by European officials, the chiefly élites often used their considerable influence to undermine the authority of the Native Governments; where attempts were made to overcome the problem by appointing members of chiefly families to official positions, the malleability of the Native Governments was accordingly reduced. The *unimane* of the southern Gilberts also remained aloof from the Native Governments and sought refuge in informal councils that settled land disputes, organised village social life, and acted as a check on the Native Governments. Although chiefs and powerful old men clearly represented a continuity with the past they were, in a sense, no more than the tip of the iceberg that represented traditional values and social organisation. Even where chiefs had long since abdicated in favour of pastors, or the old men had apparently surrendered their power to government-appointed Kaubure, there was a general adherence to a deeply-rooted body of custom upon which alien laws and religious beliefs had made only a superficial impact.

While rivalries between Catholic and Protestant in the Gilbert Islands might be seen as part of a wider 'War of the Missions', there were also factors of residence, kin relationship, and political loyalty which might explain an individual's preference for one faith over another. Significantly, it was those islands which had formerly been the least unified that exhibited the greatest enthusiasm for sectarian discrimination. Butaritari and Abaiang, which had been mostly Protestant in the 1890s, were mostly Catholic by the 1930s; the transition, although certainly aided by the declining presence of one mission and the increasing efforts of the other, was accomplished gradually, peacefully, and without any great disruption. Further south, not only were the missions more evenly balanced, but the adherents of each adopted their chosen cause with a fervour and intolerance that could be matched only by a minority of the European missionaries. There was constant harassment of minority groups, bickering between Catholics and Protestants in the Native Governments, and frequent allegations of partial tax assessments and court decisions. Father Pujebet of the MSC found the Protestant-dominated government of Nikunau hostile towards the sports that he organised for his students on Sunday afternoons, and, predictably, unprepared to accept his obviously excessive demands for communal works exemptions for his teacher trainees. In one altercation that led to his removal from the island, he retreated within the mission compound with his followers and, armed with a loaded fowling-piece, refused entry to the officials of the Native Government. It was characteristic of the mission that it refused to accept Eliot's ruling that

Pujebet could return to any island of the group except Nikunau until a formal proclamation of the prohibition had been issued.⁸ Nor did the MSC give up its attempts to establish a presence on Tamana and Arorae against the wishes of both the Government and the Islanders. After an incident on Arorae in 1936, and in the knowledge that the mission also harboured plans for the conversion of the Ellice Islands to Catholicism, the Government enacted the Closed Districts Ordinance under which aliens required permits to land on specified islands.

While religious fervour was common enough, on only one occasion did it reach hysterical proportions; at Onotoa, in 1930, a revival led by one Barane, an LMS pastor, exploded into violence with, as its victims, a small Roman Catholic minority whose presence was believed to be delaying the millenium.⁹ The movement began innocently enough. An LMS fund-raising venture to help pay for a new *John Williams* coincided with the annual demand for tax copra; Koata, the Native Magistrate—by all unbiased accounts an excellent official, totally loyal to the Government—saw it as his duty to remind the villagers of their obligations to Caesar. He was seen, or portrayed, as a Roman Catholic intent on persecuting the Protestants. The hope of punishment, a form of martyrdom, was frustrated by Koata who recognised that no offence had been committed and decided to await the arrival of the District Officer. But the anticipation remained, Barane became an interpreter of dreams and a prophet to the hundreds of Onotoans who began to camp around the Protestant church at Kotene. Predictions of a personal appearance by the Lord were made, and his non-arrival explained away by the continuation of adultery, smoking, doubting and Roman Catholicism among the chosen people. Young women, their leaders known as Christ the Sufferer and Christ the Forgiver, began to feel pain when sin was committed, some developed a capacity for 'dying' to be resurrected by prayer, or by the singing of their fellow 'Sheep'. The male counterparts of the Jesus Christs were the 'Swords of Gabriel'—a small group of young men who led the 'Soldiers', maintained order in the movement, and believed that by lifting a finger they could direct the power of God and destroy His enemies. On 9 August 1930, one of the Jesus Christs heard a heavenly voice urging Barane to persuade Koata to accept the New Way. As H.E. Maude, the District Officer who conducted the official investigation into the movement, later wrote:

Barane believed the instructions to have come from God himself, and on 11 August he headed a procession consisting of seven mission pastors and teachers, three Swords of Gabriel, 14 soldiers, about 40 sheep and three Jesus Christs.¹⁰

After the singing, near-hysterical crowd had failed to convince the Magistrate, and the Swords had proved ineffective as instruments of divine wrath, a general skirmish broke out in which Koata and several

others were injured; two Catholics, pursued and attacked by the angry mob, later died. Barane himself was a man of peace and it was his intervention that almost certainly saved the lives of Koata and of a priest who had visited the island early in August — on the very day on which the people were expecting a Protestant Saviour.

Two days after the affray, Maude and the Reverend G.H. Eastman, head of the LMS in the Gilberts, arrived from Beru where they had heard rumours of the events taking place. By showing that the movement was supported by neither church nor state, their combined efforts accelerated the erosion begun by the realisation that punishment must follow from the deaths and destruction caused by the movement. The Native Government was reconstituted, Barane was removed from the island, and the settlement at Kotene abandoned. While the subsequent inquiry and trials revealed a persisting belief in the veracity of the dreams and prophecies of the preceding months, and in the various divine powers claimed by the leading figures of the movement, the collection of evidence and the questioning of witnesses tended to quench the fires of enthusiasm. The punishments given the prime offenders were heavy enough to be an object lesson, but not so severe as to create martyrs. Within months the movement was a spent force; the Government had reimposed its law, the mission had rejected the New Way, and God had failed to take possession of His land.

On this occasion the LMS and the Government acted in concert because the New Way was inimical to both their interests, but over the preceding two decades they had more often been in conflict than in agreement. In Campbell's time, the sparse resources of the Government had been concentrated in the northern and central islands where the Native Governments had been less readily accepted and where the priests of the MSC were most active. But with the moderation of the more provocative Roman Catholic demands, and a gradual increase in the numbers of District Officers, the Government began to turn its attention to the south. In part, this was an obvious development, but it was actuated also by a realisation that the Reverend William Goward, after his initial struggle with the older generation of Samoan pastors, had begun to exercise a power much greater than the Government's own on Beru where he ran the Mission's training school and, through his pastors, on Nikunau, Onotoa, Tamana and Arorae.

Until his retirement in 1916, Murdoch had visited the southern islands from Abemama as shipping allowed but otherwise the Native Governments had been left unsupervised. The man chosen to remedy this situation was Henry Newton who had worked as a mechanic for the Pacific Phosphate Company, as Government Storekeeper on Tarawa, and as Officer-in-Charge of Police at Ocean Island before being made a District Officer in 1917. Newton began by insisting that villages be 'improved' by an increased commitment to communal works and by replacing officials whom he thought were dominated by

the LMS. Goward's intelligence network of pastors and teachers, and the Gilbertese belief that the power of the LMS was greater than that of the Government, proved, as Eliot reported, to be a combination which was beyond the 'tact, education and patience' of Newton to handle. Believing himself to be the victim of a conspiracy, and finding the situation slipping from his control, Newton enforced an even more severe work discipline, imprisoned without trial, defied the missions by insisting that all should attend *maneaba* dances and that none should wear European clothing, and ruled by his own law. On Arorae the Native Magistrate invoked Newton's name and imposed even harsher laws; all adults—even old people, pregnant women and nursing mothers—were forced to work six days each week building walls for the prison; drought rations were inequitably distributed; trees in the way of a new road were destroyed without their owners being consulted or compensated; and public dancing, with compulsory attendance, organised at the time of prayer meetings. When Newton visited Arorae, and tried to arrest one of the critics of his Magistrate, the man was protected by friends. Newton panicked and drew a revolver whereupon he was attacked by the hostile crowd who now believed that their Magistrate had, indeed, been acting on Newton's instructions. Newton was quite badly injured and his life was saved only by the intervention of the Samoan pastor. After the incident Newton himself was in a pathetic state, a nervous wreck, and he was allowed to resign. For the Government the incident was a great embarrassment but, Eliot believed, the attack on Newton, although provoked, might prove to be the occasion for establishing government dominance in the southern Gilberts—a task made easier by the retirement of Goward and his replacement by the more liberal Eastman.¹¹

This time Eliot chose to send Arthur Grimble to the southern Gilberts. Grimble had spent the previous two years in the northern and central islands where a goodly proportion of the populace was still Pagan, and where the MSC, then in a liberal phase, permitted its adherents to participate in *maneaba* dances. Grimble had a great admiration for the old Pagan Gilbertese who told him of their legends and their customs, and taught him to dance. The transformation of the south under Protestantism offended his romantic perceptions of Gilbertese society as he thought it ought to be and, he believed, stood in the way of good government:

That the work of the Protestant Mission has been valuable is very evident, since it prepared the way of Government in the South, and has since supplied whatever traces of education one may observe among the people. But it has attempted by education to do the work of evolution.

It has endeavoured in a single span to bridge the abyss between savagery and modernism, and succeeded only in wrecking the native character ... The most painful results of this abortive attempt are (a) the disappearance of the native gentleman with

his primitive yet perfectly clean cut standards of conduct; (b) the birth of the native snob; a being ashamed of his ancestry, ashamed of his history, ashamed of his legends, ashamed practically of everything that ever happened to his race outside the chapel and the class-room. Anything therefore in the nature of a race-ideal is lost upon him. His national tendencies are not merely revised, they are obliterated. The fine courtesy and respect paid in pagan days by young to old are dead with disuse: The Christian youth owes no reverence to his unconverted seniors. This is the seed of all insubordination. If a native official is not a Christian, he commands no willing obedience among the elect. If on the contrary he is a convert, he has no sympathy or understanding to waste upon pagan villagers. He cannot afford to show such qualities for fear of falling from grace.¹²

And should the convert participate in what was generally described as 'native dancing', his fall from grace would be absolute. Although Goward, after eighteen years in the Gilberts, prided himself that he had never witnessed such dancing it was, he believed, the cause and occasion of sorcery, promiscuity, drunkenness and violence—a sign of heathen decadence to be swept away. But the dancers found an advocate in Grimble:

The dance is the sole historic document of the islands, the sole common bond of sympathy between them—it is therefore the sole basis on which can be established a national ideal of indigenous growth...¹³

He also argued that dancing was a 'healthy occupation', that it 'diverts the native's mind from immorality, which is generally the result of pure idleness', that immorality and crime were more common in the south than in the Pagan dancing north. Eastman, Goward's successor, was prepared to negotiate with the Government over rules to control 'indecent' or excessive dancing but he was not impressed with either Grimble or his arguments. After all, how much notice should he take of one who had

... identified himself with the protagonists of the native dances to the extent of submitting himself to the pagan ceremonies of initiation into the high-priesthood, if one may so call it, of the dances, and has gone to the length of having the dancing marks tattooed on his person...¹⁴

The compromise reached regarding permissible types and hours of dancing defused the issue but satisfied neither side; on some islands pastors and deacons retained effective bans, on others the Native Governments insisted that all should dance during the times specified, and the dances often varied depending on whether or not mission or government observers were present.

It was in accordance with the policies of both the Government and the missions that the latter should assume the major responsibility for education. Although standards of teacher-training were not high, it

was still a tribute to the work of Bingham, and to the missionaries of all denominations, that most Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders were literate in their own language, or in Samoan, by the 1920s. The Government had always encouraged mass instruction by making education compulsory for children living within reach of a school, but it was not until 1913 that the Government recognised any responsibility in this area and even then, with £75 being given annually to each of the three missions, its contribution was modest in the extreme.¹⁵ In 1917 these grants were increased and three years later an Education Department (a single official) was established with responsibility for liaising with the missions and for running the European and Banaban schools at Ocean Island.

A constant complaint of officials was that no mission school had succeeded in educating any Islander to a sufficient standard for him to be employed as an interpreter. Given the policies of all missions to teach only in the vernacular or, in the Ellice Islands, in Samoan, this was hardly surprising. However it did create difficulties for a government with a constant and increasing need for clerks and other workers with a basic understanding of English. It was to meet this need, and in the hope of upgrading village schools, that the King George V School was opened at Bairiki, on Tarawa, in May 1922. Finding that the Government was not prepared to build a second school, the Ellice Islanders rejected the idea of sending their children to Tarawa and offered to meet the costs of their own school; they promised food and buildings, £850 a year for three years to pay the salary of a European schoolmaster, and £3 annually for each of 60 pupils. In accepting the offer, the Government agreed to meet all costs after three years and keep a European teacher in charge of the school.¹⁶

The nature and purpose of education in government schools was soon the subject of heated debate. F.G.L. Holland and D.G. Kennedy, headmasters of the King George V and Ellice Islands Schools respectively, both wanted an emphasis on academic subjects, and English as the medium of instruction, with their graduates being sent to take charge of government village schools in which arithmetic and English would be taught. They argued that the continued isolation of the Colony could not be assumed and that education in anticipation of improved communications and increased contact with the outside world should begin gradually and 'from the bottom up'. The proposed scheme was intended to widen horizons through the availability of literature in English, to facilitate the dissemination of new ideas, and to make the Islanders less vulnerable to the blandishments of unscrupulous traders. It was, of course, a scheme that was totally at variance with the Colony's administrative policies. To McClure, the scheme appeared 'administratively unsound and contrary to all the accepted principles of good government of a native race'; moreover, he argued, the Colony was 'unique in its isolation and lack of potentialities', there was no prospect of development and,

therefore, education in English was 'utterly unnecessary if not fraught with actual danger' in as much as unfulfilled aspirations would breed social discontent. McClure's view prevailed; there was no expansion of government schools, and village education was left to the missions.¹⁷

The same issue was raised again at the end of 1926 when the first graduates were about to leave the King George V School for employment by the Government, the British Phosphate Commission or the missions. All immediate vacancies in the Government service were filled, future positions would be few, and Grimble, as Resident Commissioner, questioned the wisdom of a policy that would produce a constant stream of graduates for whom there would be no prospect of employment:

It was constantly though rather nebulously hoped that the overplus of boys . . . would fulfil the function of "torch bearers" of a higher culture on their return to village life.

. . . I am convinced that no useful dissemination of culture can be achieved along the lines indicated. Under the present scheme of education, drafts of 60 boys at a time remain at the school for approximately five years. The contemplated procession of "torch bearers" relied upon to convert the atavism of 30,000 natives (distributed through 300 villages, on sixteen scattered islands) would thus resolve itself, at best, into a quinquennial trickle of 40 immature youths. [The other 20 would be employed.] I submit that this could and would produce no appreciable effect whatever upon the collective dirtiness, inertia, improvidence, and domestic unenlightenment of the people.¹⁸

With the LMS also deploring the dangers of 'unrest and discontent' that might follow the return to village life of an unemployable 'class of partially educated clerks with a very superficial knowledge of English',¹⁹ education policy was again revised. The Banaban school was closed and its most promising pupils transferred to Tarawa; the number of Gilbertese pupils was halved; and teachers from both the Roman Catholic and Protestant missions admitted for specialised training before being sent to new improved (and subsidised) village schools. By the mid-1930s this scheme had also foundered because the missions were dissatisfied with the secular nature of instruction at the Tarawa school and the unwillingness of many of its graduates to accept church discipline.²⁰

The Ellice Islands School, established at Funafuti by Donald Kennedy in 1924, also had mixed fortunes. Within a few months of its foundation difficulties over land, buildings and food supply forced Kennedy to transfer the school to Vaitupu. There he introduced a system of annual recruitment and graduation, established a severe, even brutal, military-style discipline, and kept his pupils occupied with lessons, organised sports, and work in the school compound and plantations. Despite the harshness of his regime, his drinking, and the bevy of 'house-girls' who ministered to his needs, Kennedy was

respected, even admired, by the Ellice Islanders. More important, he not only achieved a high academic standard in the school but also inculcated in his pupils an exceptional degree of self-discipline and commitment to duty; and, after two generations of subservience to Samoan influence, he regenerated a pride in Ellice Islands language, culture and identity. Safely remote from his superior on Tarawa, and from the Resident Commissioner on Ocean Island, Kennedy pursued the policies he and Holland had espoused in 1923; he placed great stress on English and other academic subjects, his graduates were employed in the government service, by the Native Governments and in village schools; the best students became his assistant teachers.²¹

But even distance could not save Kennedy from the reorientation of education policies implemented by Grimble in the early 1930s. It was believed that, as in the Gilberts, the needs of the Government had been met and that there was no longer any need for such an expensive institution. In tones reminiscent of McClure, Grimble declared:

The system of Government education at present obtaining in the Ellice Group threatens to produce a class of youths both economically useless and socially dangerous . . . The point is that all merely academic instruction should now be abandoned, and a revised syllabus, having in view every need and limitation of village life should be adopted.²²

On these grounds, and because Kennedy had begun to show symptoms of filariasis, Grimble recommended that the best pupils from the school should be transferred to Tarawa, that the Ellice Islands School become a 'native institution' with a simplified curriculum, and that Kennedy should be transferred to the administrative service as District Officer for the Ellice Islands. The removal of Kennedy brought the Government up against the undertakings it had given in 1922. Rather than reimburse the Ellice Islanders with the £2600 they had paid into the school, the downgrading was made 'an occasion for advancement, not retrogression', and the Ellice Islanders were offered 'a series of compensating educational values in replacement of that which is lost'.²³ In 1932, five Ellice Islanders were transferred to the King George V School on Tarawa.

For their part, the Ellice Islanders accepted the inevitability of the change and, with reluctance, endorsed the new scheme. But to the memory of the unfulfilled promises made over their former Island Funds, they added the loss of their European schoolmaster and the need to send their children out of the group for secondary education as instances of their interests being sacrificed for the convenience of the Colony Government. In the 1930s the Ellice Islands School continued in much the same way as before. As District Officer Kennedy still spent much of his time at Vaitupu. The school also developed a momentum of its own and when Kennedy was transferred to the Solomon Islands shortly before the war, it was able to continue without external guidance.

Kennedy, alone among the officials who served in the Colony in the 1920s and 1930s, seemed able to perceive the inevitable direction of future colonial policy. The foundations of education and the sense of community of purpose established by the LMS combined with Kennedy's contributions (not the least of which was the use of the Ellice Islands language instead of Samoan as the official language of government) to give the Ellice Islanders a head-start in the post-war world. The educational achievements of those taught by Kennedy and his disciples were such that they won a high proportion of the scholarships available for overseas study, and they rapidly came to dominate the higher levels of the local civil service in the 1950s and 1960s. The consequent resentment felt by the Gilbertese, and the ill-feeling that developed between the races, were important factors in the eventual partition of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in 1975.

But such developments were generally not foreseen in the 1930s. Official policy recognised political progress as desirable but anticipated the devolution of some responsibilities to autonomous island governments rather than the eventual emergence of an independent state. Even this limited goal was seen as a remote ideal unlikely to be achieved in the lifetimes of either governors or governed. Indeed, the practice of government, with its authoritarian structure and insistence on conformity was steadily eroding the indigenous capacity for self-rule. The Resident Commissionership of Arthur Grimble (1926-32) marked the high-point of paternalistic rule with the 1930 Regulations as its most obvious symbol. Grimble was the last in a line of like-minded men that stretched back to William Telfer Campbell. He, like Campbell, wanted to wrest from the missions their influence over village life that he might replace it with his own and, as far as possible, he wanted to preserve the isolation of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands from the outside world. Grimble pursued what he called a 'museum policy' and he had his own romanticised view of Gilbertese society. When he became Resident Commissioner, he had served for twelve years in one of the smallest, most remote dependencies of the Empire and by remaining, though not by choice, in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands he had been shielded from exposure to more modern concepts of colonial rule.

The education debate of the 1920s foreshadowed the challenge to authoritarianism that was to emerge in the 1930s. Once Grimble had left the Colony in August 1932, a new generation of District Officers tried to persuade his successors to dismantle the machinery of control that had been preserved since the days of Campbell. Their leader was H.E. Maude, a young anthropology graduate who later served as Resident Commissioner himself before embarking on an academic career.²⁴ Maude was more concerned with giving the Islanders the laws and government they wanted than with the dictates of colonial policy. In particular, he directed himself to the refusal of colonial authorities to recognise that traditional leaders still retained the

respect of their fellow Islanders and, so long as there was no pressure to conform to a single structure, could effectively run the Native Governments and administer laws in accordance with custom. In the matter of incest, for example, Grimble had maintained that customary law had been forgotten and, in 1929, had decreed that the offence was to be defined in terms of English law. Maude disagreed. Only the former insistence on clan exogamy had been relaxed, he argued, and in the Gilberts the prohibition of marriages between all couples who could trace 'a common ancestor, either by blood or adoption, up to and including the third generation' still applied except for the chiefly families of the northern islands who had always been exempt from this restriction on their choice of partner.²⁵ The law was amended.

The main object of attack, however, was Grimble's 1930 Regulations. J.C. Barley, Grimble's successor as Resident Commissioner, was sympathetic to the idea of reform but unwilling to effect such a major change so early in his administration. Frustrated by his attitude, Maude and his junior colleagues sent copies of the code to Camilla Wedgwood, an anthropologist who had worked on Nauru in the early 1930s. She, in turn, sent them to her redoubtable father, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, a fiery opposition Member of the House of Commons who had taken an interest in the Colony's affairs since he had joined the critics of the Pacific Phosphate Company some thirty years before. This 'truculent upholder of the Individual's Right to Live', as Barley called him, threatened to table the Regulations for debate in the Commons unless immediate and substantial revisions were made. Barley, bewildered by the sudden attention from London, called on Maude, then in charge of the Lands Commission, to draft a new code for the Gilbert Islands.²⁶ The resulting amendments recognised the diversity of customary law. While all Native Governments were bound to a general code dealing with such basic issues as public health and safety, communal works, freedom of worship, and the compromise control of public dancing, they were allowed to enact special regulations to meet local circumstances. Most did so and took the opportunity of giving legal sanction to customary restrictions on fishing methods and seasons; a few took steps to protect the dancing 'patents' of individual villages from would-be imitators. The more offensive of Grimble's regulations — for example, those regarding adoption, the soliciting of goods or services, feasts, family obligations and the uses of eating and sleeping houses were all reworded or repealed.²⁷

Kennedy, who had been associated with the original movement for reform, drafted new regulations for the Ellice Islands. In doing so, he emphasised that for thirty years the Government had ignored the differences in social and political structures between the Gilbert and Ellice groups and the inappropriateness of many of the Gilbert Islands regulations to the smaller, more cohesive, communities of the Ellice group where, for the most part, the people of each island lived in a

single village, were mostly related in some way, had shared the same school, and were all Protestant. Most members of the Native Governments also held office in the church. Gradually the Native Governments had become a blend of traditional, church and colonial institutions. Regulations concerning the inspection and use of canoes, fishing, feasting, games and dancing were not enforced, Kennedy reported, and would have been regarded as intolerably oppressive if anyone had attempted to do so. Yet Kennedy, for his part, wanted strong regulations which could lie dormant, and be available if less formal methods of control proved unsuccessful. A revised code, embodying most of Kennedy's amendments, was delayed by the outbreak of war and not introduced until 1947.²⁸ Kennedy also reported a degree of political instability caused by a survival of factionalism which, throughout the colonial period, had led to the frequent withdrawal of support from public officials. The solution, Kennedy argued, lay in a corps of magistrates who might be trained at the Ellice Islands School. Then, he added, political and social affairs might be left to popularly elected governments led by the Chiefs of Kaupule. While the idea of a separation of powers appealed to Barley, he would not concede that young officials, even if well educated, would command respect as a judiciary.²⁹

In the subsequent debate over the reform of local government the proposals of Maude were eventually accepted. He held that the Magistrate was too strongly entrenched as the head of the Native Government and as its chief judicial officer for any alternative scheme to succeed. But it was fundamental to Maude's proposals that traditional leaders should again be found a place in the Native Governments. This was to be achieved by establishing Island Councils, Island Courts and Lands Courts all headed by the Native Magistrates. Kaubure, in effect Island Councillors, were to be elected by all adults over the age of thirty. Where they were still recognised, High Chiefs would again become members of the Native Governments. An ordinance embodying these changes was promulgated in 1941 but not implemented until after the Second World War.

Lands Courts were created in an attempt to reduce the numbers of outstanding disputes (some 76 000 in the mid-1930s) over the ownership of lands, *babai* and *pulaka* pits and fish traps. When the Protectorates had been established in 1892, title to lands was vested in the persons then in possession. Campbell, for taxation purposes, had established a register of holdings for each island and, at the same time, authorised the island governments to hear and settle lands disputes. But the grievances multiplied because the equity of the 1892 ruling was not universally accepted and because as long as there was any chance, however remote, of a new hearing, or an appeal, the land-hungry Islanders would persist with litigation. And as Grimble, the first Lands Commissioner in the Gilbert Islands, had soon found, land disputes were pursued in accordance with a quite distinct morality,

unrelated to other aspects of traditional life, in which any means were justified by victory:

I should be sorry if it were gathered . . . [he wrote in a report on the causes of lands disputes] that the Gilbert Native was an unreliable person in all his dealings. He is not so. In general he is lovable, intelligent and truthful. But land is his passion, and in his dealings therewith he is a changed being, whose chief characteristics are amazing untruthfulness and supreme cupidity.³⁰

And as hearings were a public occasion, the quality of the argument was an art-form in itself, an occasion for great oratory and entertainment which might secure the coveted land or at least ensure that defeat was no disgrace. Even so, litigants disgruntled with Lands Commission findings tried to poison Grimble at least twice and Maude once — an indication of the seriousness with which any land issue was taken. Lands Commissioners aside, Newton was the only European official ever attacked in any way by Gilbertese and then only when he had given extreme provocation. Presumably W.C.B. Baverstock had offended in some lesser manner when, in the early 1930s, some villagers on Nikunau killed and ate his dog.³¹

Over the years, Campbell's registers had been altered by the Native Governments, often for factional advantage, as well as by European officials with an imperfect knowledge of both language and custom. The island worst affected was Tarawa where the arrival of Captain Davis had brought an end to a generation of civil war and fluctuating land ownership. When the first Lands Commission was established under Grimble in 1918 it was only on Tarawa, and on some of the other northern islands, that he made a general settlement of claims. Then, a shortage of officials, and Grimble's refusal to allow other officials to hear disputes except under his supervision, caused a delay for more than a decade until new commissions, under Maude in the Gilberts and Kennedy in the Ellice, began to tackle the problem systematically with the aid of local assessors. Even this offered only a temporary palliative, however, because with individuals each owning several pieces of land to be redistributed at death, there was a constant generation of new disputes; it was hoped that after a general settlement by the Commissions most of these could be resolved locally. With land of such vital importance and with, in this instance, the wisdom of age being given due recognition, it took little to persuade the old men to enter this area of local government.

The Lands Commissions of the 1930s also drew attention to the distribution of resources among families, and produced evidence of some 'land hunger'. In 1931 Maude had conducted the first systematic census of the Colony. The results showed that, after a decline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the population of most islands was increasing steadily, partly because of improved health and hygiene measures and partly because warfare and traditional forms of birth control had been all but eliminated by combined pressure from the

missions and the Government while actual and potential land hunger had been exacerbated by the demands for taxes and church donations. Although Maude subsequently conceded that his claim was not scientifically proven, he argued at the time that Beru, Arorae, Onotoa, Nikunau and, possibly Nonouti and Niutao, could not support any increase in population and he believed that for families with little or no land the only dignified future lay in resettlement. After several years of debate, approval was finally given for Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders to be resettled in the uninhabited Phoenix group — the last additions to the British Empire. Most islands of the group were annexed and included within the boundaries of the Colony specifically for the purposes of resettlement, although future needs for trans-Pacific aviation and possible conflict with the United States over sovereignty were also borne in mind. Altogether some 700 colonists renounced their land rights at home and went to live in the Phoenix Islands between 1938 and 1940. Although their life was not always easy, it was seldom more difficult than it had been in the Gilberts, and when the scheme was abandoned after twenty years it was, on two of the three islands concerned, more for administrative and financial reasons than because of the viability or otherwise of the settlements themselves.³²

Another step taken in the 1930s to give the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders a greater return from their lands and produce was the attempt to eliminate commercial profits through the encouragement of co-operative trading societies. From the 1870s island leaders had imposed, and enforced, trade boycotts in their attempts to control the cost relationship between copra and imported goods. While they were well versed in the working of the local market, and could soon detect sharp practice, the Islanders were less familiar with the fluctuations of world prices and their most determined attempts to control or by-pass traders coincided with depressions in the copra market. Their capacity to divide and rule among the traders was steadily eroded in the 20th century, however, by the Government's support, through its licensing policy, of large firms over small traders and by its willingness to intervene on their behalf. In 1909, for example, Arthur Mahaffy who toured the islands as Acting Resident Commissioner in Burns Philp and Company's *SS Muniara* took it upon himself to order the cessation of a 'strike' called in response to a low copra price and a common price agreement among the three leading firms. He even went 'so far as to threaten the natives on Tamana that if they did not immediately cut their copra he would bring natives from other islands to do so.'³³ In the Ellice group, Mahaffy found that most traders had been forced out by the turn of the century because their activities reduced church contributions, and that while most Islanders in the group were dependent on occasional visits by trading vessels there was on Funafuti a locally owned trading company with sufficient capital to buy wholesale. Other, less successful, ventures of a similar nature also appeared from time to time.

Thus there was both a background of collective commercialism and a receptive attitude caused by the depression when Kennedy established the first co-operative trading society on Vaitupu in 1926. Its immediate success prompted Maude to introduce the concept to the Gilbert Islands where there were thirty-four societies, most with fewer than 200 members, operating by the mid-1930s. Here, as in the Lands Courts, the traditional leaders were prepared to lend their influence and to become involved. Despite a degree of naivete in business management, the movement thrived, and after the Second World War the Government was able to take over importing and to effectively localise trade throughout the Colony.³⁴

Although many of the reforms initiated in the 1930s were not implemented until after the Second World War there was, from the time of Barley's arrival, a new atmosphere surrounding the activities of the Government. The departure of Grimble, whose voice had been dominant in matters of 'native administration' for fifteen years, marked the end of an era. It was not simply that he, like Campbell, had been autocratic in his approach to administration but he had, as Resident Commissioner, been an autocrat towards his staff as well. In the 1920s the members of that staff had generally lacked the ability, education and perception that made for good administration but by the early 1930s the overall calibre of officials had improved markedly; the Colony was able to recruit from British universities and was no longer dependent on remittance men, former traders, and graduates from the Ocean Island phosphate industry. A distinct reform movement was evident in the late 1930s under the administrations of Barley (1933-41) and Garvey (Acting Resident Commissioner 1938-9, 1941-2) but it was for reform within prescribed limits. Most of the innovations — in, for example, the law, local government, the settlement of lands disputes, and the co-operative movement — were intended to make life for the Gilbert and Ellice Islanders less regimented, more satisfying in customary terms, and less dependent on the guidance or control of the Government. It was not until after the Second World War, and the occupation of the Colony by first Japanese and then American forces, that serious attention was paid to national development and the building of a foundation for self-rule.

CHAPTER NINE

The Second World War and beyond

In December 1941 the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, for so long an unimportant outpost of the Empire, were suddenly swept into the turmoil of the Second World War. Conflict in the region had become inevitable as Japan, unchallenged, continued to build up its military strength. On 7 December 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbour signalled the beginning of the war for the mastery of the Pacific. The Islanders were bewildered to see their masters and benefactors depart in so ignominious a fashion when Japanese occupation seemed imminent. There is, after all, only a very fine line between a strategic evacuation and desertion, and the distinction was lost upon a people who had little appreciation of global politics. The islands became a war theatre as the Japanese occupied Butaritari, Tarawa and Abemama and then, from November 1943, when the Battle of Tarawa all but obliterated everything above ground level on the islet of Betio, the main Japanese stronghold, the American army established a major base in its place and a lesser presence on Butaritari and Abemama. Earlier, Funafuti, Nukufetau and Nanumea in the Ellice Islands had served as advance bases for American attacks on Japanese positions in the Gilberts. In a country where a kerosene lamp, a bicycle, or a sewing machine were luxuries, and where ice could still mystify the uninitiated, the technological sophistication of war machinery and consumer products widened the horizons of those who lived near or worked for the occupying armies. While it remained, the American military presence dominated lifestyles, offered new opportunities to make money, to travel, and led to a re-ordering of Islanders' perceptions of the world and of their own place in it. Beside the self-confident might of the American presence, British officialdom faded into insignificance and, for some, Uncle Sam became the new Messiah. But the war soon moved past the central Pacific, and ended finally at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945; the few remaining Americans soon went home, their airfields were replanted with coconuts, and with that typical acceptance bordering on fatalism that is so peculiarly theirs, the Islanders accepted the reimposition of the old ways and began to see the war with its excitement for all, and sadness for some, as little more than a memory. There was no demand for self-rule, no rejection of colonial authority, only a general relief that calm had once again settled over the islands. For the colonial powers, and particularly for Britain, the peace was not so easy. Disorder in the West Indies had already led to the Colonial

Development and Welfare Scheme under which Britain made available significant quantities of development aid; some now argued that the colonial peoples had paid for their freedom through their war effort; and although few fully realised its implications at the time, the independence of India in 1947 marked the beginning of the end for Empire.

At first, Britain's involvement in the European war had made little impact on the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. There were some shortages of goods and services, but a compensating increase of incomes from copra. For the Islanders isolated from the pockets of European settlement, life went on as before. But this customary somnolence ended dramatically when Japan attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbour. Within days Ocean Island had been bombed, Tarawa visited and Butaritari occupied by Japanese forces. At Tarawa, small craft and discoverable radio equipment were smashed, and some food and personal property seized. European residents were threatened, but none was harmed. In February 1942 all Europeans save the Dispenser and a Wireless Operator (both of whom chose to remain) left in small launches and having reached Nonouti 270 km to the south, were evacuated to Fiji in the *Degei*, a former trading schooner. Most other Europeans in the group left at the same time, except for the priests and nuns of the MSC and the Reverend A.L. Sadd of the LMS, while at Ocean Island all Europeans and Chinese wishing to leave were evacuated.¹

Also left in the islands after this general evacuation of Europeans were the Coastwatchers, mostly New Zealanders, who had been placed throughout the central and southwest Pacific to monitor enemy shipping and aircraft movements. In most cases civilian radio-operators (later attested into the army) were accompanied by one or two experienced soldiers. Published accounts of coastwatching have generally concentrated upon the heroic exploits of Donald Kennedy (former headmaster of the Ellice Islands School), Martin Clemens and others in the Japanese-occupied Solomon Islands where engagements with enemy troops were common enough and a 'lifeline' for American airmen saved many lives. On more southern islands, remote from the front, coastwatching became at worst tedious, at best a tropical holiday; in the Gilbert Islands where the small coral islands offered little hope of concealment, coastwatching was shortlived with a few Coastwatchers being imprisoned in December 1941, and the rest being captured and executed in October 1942.²

Coastwatchers were first landed in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in July 1941; fifteen stations were established by October. Despite occasional bickering and personality clashes, most groups settled to their long vigil with considerable fortitude, but tempers sometimes flared and one pair in the Ellice Islands managed to go for months without speaking to each other. Some of the men entered into liaisons with local women and at Maiana the people risked the execution of hostages long enough for one Coastwatcher to see his child born

before surrendering to the Japanese. No doubt others, like Basil Were at Butaritari, listened to the radio news and then made their own local announcements 'with the aid of an Interpreter, a school atlas and a rough blackboard'. Already, Were found, the Gilbertese had lost much of their faith in Britain and saw America as their only possible saviour.³

This Gilbertese pessimism soon proved to be well-founded. From bases in the Marianas, Carolines and Marshalls, the Japanese struck southwards to occupy the Solomons, parts of New Guinea and the Gilberts by mid-1942. Only in retrospect was the full extent of the military build-up that had taken place in Micronesia in the 1930s revealed. And the reasons for excluding all but Japanese traders from the Mandated Territories since the 1920s, and for extending the Japanese economic presence south of the Equator, became only too clear.

Although Japanese trading vessels had visited the Gilberts since the First World War, there was only a single Japanese national in the Gilberts at the time of Pearl Harbour. He was Kansaki, a trader at Butaritari for Nanyo Boyeki Kaisha. Not long before the war, Kansaki had built himself a new trade store with an upper storey of timber and a lower, almost basement-like storeroom of reinforced concrete. The latter survived the war, and it may have been only coincidence that it had all the attributes of a bunker and occupied a commanding position looking towards the wharf and lagoon entrance. It is still not clear whether Kansaki was simply a trader, or whether his presence had some more sinister purpose. On 8 December 1941, the day after Pearl Harbour, he was interned by G. Fulford Williams, the District Officer, only to be released on the 10th when a convoy of twenty-three Japanese vessels entered the Butaritari lagoon. Williams was captured together with six Coastwatchers from Makin, Butaritari and Abaiang. As the first prisoners of war to reach Japan their arrival was widely publicised, but their incarceration for the duration was routine.⁴ At Butaritari, Kansaki became interpreter and liaison officer for the occupying army. It was he who drafted the Gilbertese into labour gangs and, as well as he was able, interceded on behalf of Gilbertese who had invoked the wrath of the Japanese. In 1942 the Butaritari sea-plane base represented the outer perimeter of the Japanese-occupied Pacific although its garrison of only forty-three soldiers led by a Sergeant-Major represented little more than a token presence.

By mid-year, American forces were ready to strike back and their primary aim was to divert Japanese attention and resources towards the central Pacific and away from the Solomons where the first major counter attack was planned. On 17 August a force of 200 US Marines under command of Colonel Evans F. Carlson landed from the submarines *Nautilus* and *Argonaut* and wiped out the entire Butaritari garrison. The day after the raid Japanese planes bombed and razed Keaua village as a reprisal for Gilbertese co-operation with the

Marines and in the mistaken belief that the villagers were sheltering a handful of Marines left behind at the withdrawal. Forty-seven Gilbertese were killed and thirty were injured. The nine stranded Marines (who were sheltering in another village) were subsequently captured and executed at Kwajalein in the Marshalls.⁵

Initially, it seemed that with a comparatively small loss of only thirty men the Carlson Raid had been worthwhile; American morale was boosted and Japanese strategists immediately attached a much higher priority to the defence of the Gilberts. Within a week the modest sea-plane base at Butaritari was reoccupied by a full company of soldiers supported by construction workers and its strength was further doubled before the end of August. Abemama, Ocean Island and Nauru were occupied and fortified. Tarawa, now chosen as the major base for the area, became headquarters for the 1500-strong Sixth Special Naval Landing Force. Betio islet was turned into an almost impregnable fortress of reinforced concrete. By January 1943 new airfields were in operation at Nauru and Tarawa.⁶

As an Allied attempt to divert Japanese resources to the central Pacific, Carlson's Raid was a spectacular success; in other ways, it had sobering implications. As part of the process of securing the Gilberts, the Japanese rounded up all remaining Europeans (save those working for the Sacred Heart Mission) from the outlying islands and held them on Tarawa. There were seven wireless operators, ten soldier-companions, and five civilians (including the Reverend Alan Sadd of the LMS). On Tarawa they were harshly treated by their captors until, on 15 October 1942, they were beheaded after an allied raid during which one of their number had been shot trying to escape. The executions can only be seen as an act of retaliation for the bombing. There is no evidence to suggest prolonged interrogation; there was generalised maltreatment but, it would seem, no torture intended to elicit military information. It is also of significance, perhaps, that the Japanese made no attempt to use the incident to demonstrate their mastery over Europeans and, by implication, over the Gilbertese; indeed the latter knew of the massacre only from Korean labourers and through eye-witness accounts from a few individuals who risked their lives to enter the Japanese compound.⁷

But these events, tragic in themselves, had little wider significance. It was much more important that early in 1943 Allied strategists decided upon a two-pronged drive through the Pacific to Japan. One thrust was to be made through the Solomons and New Guinea while the now heavily fortified Gilberts were the only available gateway to the central Pacific. American planes needed the islands as forward bases for bombing raids on the Marshalls; in Japanese hands, the Gilberts could shelter the aircraft and submarines that harassed shipping on Pacific supply routes. By this time Japanese strength in the central Pacific was at its peak: Nauru and Tarawa had important airfields and large garrisons; there was a sea-plane base at Butaritari; Ocean Island and Abemama were occupied; and the remaining

Gilbert Islands were visited occasionally.

In the Gilbert Islands most of the Native Governments, like the schools, continued fitfully for a time, sometimes contrary to Japanese orders, and then came gradually to a halt; on some islands the Japanese tried to establish new governments or to tie the old into their own system of administration. To the Native Government officials the symbols of British rule — government registers, account books, petty cash boxes, and the heavy buckled belts of the Kaubure — took on a new importance and most were carefully wrapped and buried, or otherwise hidden away from the Japanese. The luxuries that had become necessities again became luxuries, and then disappeared altogether. Tobacco, rice and bully-beef were unprocurable, a bottle became a precious object. As the Native Governments were closed down the mantle of leadership fell upon a few strong-minded officials, church leaders and, in a more general sense, upon the old men who had never really lost their grip upon community affairs.

The most notable impact of the occupying forces was seen in the strain placed upon food resources. With the population of Tarawa nearly doubled, the loss of productive land for airfields and other military purposes, and shortages of imported food, life became more than usually marginal for the Gilbertese. They were also preyed upon by both the Japanese troops and by the thousand-strong Korean and Japanese labour force and yet they were, as might be expected, severely punished for any pilfering of supplies. At Butaritari the problem was less acute. The island was more fertile, there were fewer Japanese, and many of the Butaritari people, including the *Uea* and his family, simply crossed the narrow channel to Makin and remained there for the term of the occupation. At Butaritari, Tarawa and Abemama, Gilbertese labour gangs worked under conditions that were always strict but seldom harsh or brutal. Indeed, the Gilbertese were constantly amazed at the severity with which the officers dealt with any breach of discipline, real or imagined, within the Japanese ranks. Generally it was only the Gilbertese labourers who went into military areas; the women remained in their villages. Molestation and sexual assaults were rare. Among the Gilbertese there were neither collaborators nor martyrs. Nor was there any organised resistance, even of a passive kind. The Islanders accepted the presence of the Japanese because they had little choice; in general they satisfied themselves with keeping a dignified distance from their occupiers, giving what was demanded, but offering nothing. As their compatriots on Ocean Island had done before them, the Gilbertese, with their admiration of height and strength in a man, judged their smaller Asiatic conquerors and found them wanting.

Unlike the other Europeans in the group, the priests and nuns of the Sacred Heart were largely unharmed though restricted in their movements. Bishop Terrienne was told on one occasion by the Japanese Commander in the Gilberts that it 'made good propaganda' to leave them alone; one of his priests was told that it was because

France had been neutralised by the German conquest (and most of the mission personnel were French).⁸ The internationalism of Roman Catholicism, and its close association with Italy, another of the Axis powers, may also have been significant. Inevitably, in the light of the death of Sudd of the LMS, the spectre of Catholic collaboration was raised briefly after the war, but was soon dropped. From the Japanese point of view there was hardly a consistent policy and it would seem that in the Gilberts, as elsewhere in the Pacific, missionaries of various creeds were at the mercy of the capricious whim and fancy of Japanese commanders.

While Japanese occupation in the Gilberts was not overly oppressive, it was quite a different story at Ocean Island. There, the treatment of the Gilbertese labourers left behind at the evacuation and the Banabans was always harsh, sometimes barbaric. Perhaps the contrast can be explained in terms of different responses to command, to the pressures generated by the need to sustain at Ocean Island a garrison, a labour force, and a local population under conditions that were always difficult and became virtually impossible once the island had been by-passed and left to 'wither on the vine'⁹ by advancing American forces.

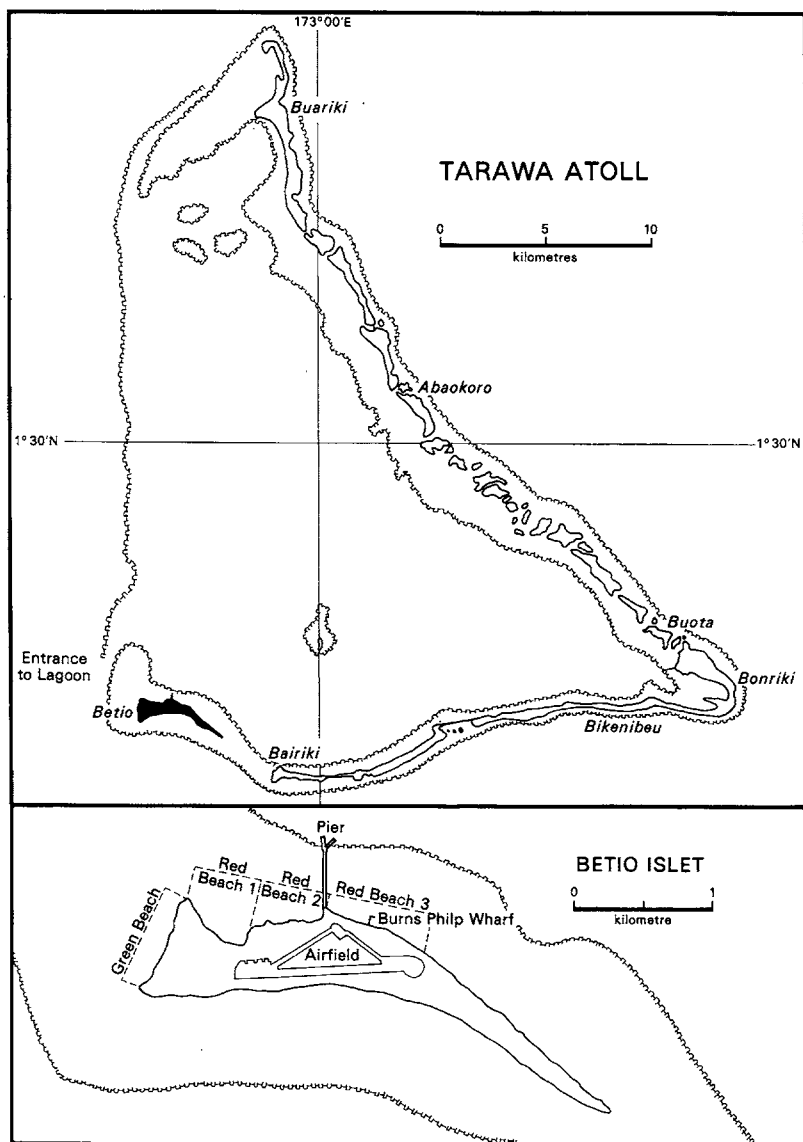
When the Europeans and Chinese were evacuated from Ocean Island in February 1942 they left behind some 500 Banabans and 800 Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders. Except for occasional reconnaissance and bombing raids the Japanese virtually ignored Ocean Island until on 30 August, in the wake of Carlson's Raid, a small force landed and imprisoned the remaining Europeans — Father J.V. Pujebet and Brother H. Brumell of the MSC; C.G.F. Cartwright, a colonial official; R. Third, a wireless operator and L.W. Cole and H.A. Mercer, BPC employees. Finding wharves, generators and major components of the phosphate-raising machinery sabotaged, the troops indulged themselves in general looting and the destruction of government property. Refusal or resistance meant death, and thus the tone of the occupation was set. Islanders were given meagre rations only after begging for them, many died of starvation. For any offence against the regime, Islanders were beaten, tied to trees, sometimes beheaded. To test the efficiency of a high-voltage electric fence built around the island three men were blindfolded, and, watched by their fellow-Islanders, forced to run into the live wire.

There were soon more than 500 soldiers and about fifty construction workers on the island. Although the generators and some other machinery were repaired, and some attempt made to supplement imported food with local produce, it was clear that the island could no longer support such a large population and the Japanese commander determined to remove most of the Islanders. Early in 1943, fifty men were sent to Kusaie in the Carolines, another group went to Ponape a few weeks later and then, in July 1943, 400 were taken to Nauru and a further 300 to Tarawa. All women and children were included in the evacuation. When this last group left

Ocean Island, two of the European prisoners were already dead. Cartwright died at Easter 1943, and Mercer in June. Cole, Third, Pujebet and Brumell all died subsequently in the Japanese hospital — in some cases, it would seem, through rather than despite the ministrations of the doctor in charge. Then, in November, Tarawa was retaken by American forces. But their prime targets lay in the Marshalls to the north, and Ocean Island was by-passed. Conditions worsened. There were, by this time about 160 Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders — all men — left with the Japanese. They were employed fishing, gathering food, and on construction; 100 were drafted as 'soldiers' and given rifles.¹⁰

One of this latter group, Nabetari of Nikunau, and a group of six friends decided that their chances of survival were as good at sea as on Ocean Island. On 3 April 1944 they escaped in three canoes, intending to head eastwards for the Gilbert Islands. However they were carried, as most canoes 'blown away' from the area are carried, to the west. On the second night the canoe with three men in it drifted apart from the others and was lost. Thereafter the two remaining canoes were tied together at night. The men lived on fish and rain water. Then, in a storm, they lost their sails. After five months the canoes parted; one was not seen again. Reuera, one of the two remaining men, was bitten by a shark and a week later he drowned when the canoe overturned. Nabetari, the sole survivor, reached the Ninigo Islands, near Manus, off the northern coast of New Guinea in November 1944 after an epic voyage of seven months.¹¹

Nabetari was one of only two survivors from the 160 Islanders left after the mass evacuation of July 1943; the other was Kabunare, also from Nikunau, who was a fisherman for the Japanese. On about 17 August 1945, the day after the Japanese surrender, the Islanders were all assembled and told that the war was over, that the Japanese would soon depart. On the following day they were again assembled, divided into small groups, their hands were bound and they were led to the low cliffs overlooking the reef-flat. Then, their eyes were covered, and they were made to squat near the edge. Some were bayoneted, others shot. Kabunare, quite by accident but with impeccable timing, fell over the cliff without his would-be executioners realising he was unharmed. He lay unmoving for an hour, then freed himself and hid in one of the many caves which honeycomb the island. It was not until 2 December, two months after the island had been reoccupied by Australian troops, that Kabunare was finally convinced that the new arrivals were friend, not foe, and he emerged from the darkness in which he had lived for ninety-one days. The man who ordered the massacre, Lieutenant-Commander Suzuki, was tried for war-crimes at Rabaul in April 1946. He offered no real defence, only an explanation. At the time, he said, he had no definite news of his country's surrender but he had heard rumours of it. Ordered to fight to the finish, and believing that the Islanders might give trouble, he passed on the order to 'shoot all the natives on the island.'¹²



Map 3 Tarawa Atoll and Betio Islet

Although Ocean Island could be left to wither on the vine, the Japanese bases in the Gilbert Islands were seen in a different light. While their offensive capacity might be neutralised by a strike at their parent bases in the Marshalls, that strike itself would be made the more hazardous because of the distance of the Marshalls from Allied bases. As it was, the Gilbert Islands were more than 1100 km from the nearest Allied airfields (in the Ellice Islands) and three times that distance from major naval bases in Hawaii and New Zealand. Moreover the amphibious assault required to take Tarawa was made more perilous because it was without precedent. Never before in modern warfare had the Marines or any other force tried to take a coral island that was so heavily fortified and offered so little cover for the attacking forces. As if this was not enough, any landing on Betio, the most heavily defended of the three bases, had to be made across a reef-flat which, if the tides were unfavourable, would not allow landing craft within several hundred metres of the beach.

Although a central Pacific offensive had long been anticipated, it was not until mid-1943 that, at the strong urging of Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided upon the Gilberts as the first stage in the central Pacific campaign. Until this time, with the exception of Carlson's Raid, the American role in the region had been largely passive. In October 1942 Funafuti and had been occupied by American forces, the Navy had dredged its lagoon and Seabees had begun work on an airfield; by January 1943 photographic missions over the Gilberts were flying from Funafuti. In September, the return of Colonel Vivian Fox-Strangways to head the British colonial administration (nominally over the whole of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony) followed closely upon the expansion of American presence in the Ellice Islands. Nukufetau soon offered harbour facilities on a par with those at Funafuti and an airfield as well; Nanumea became another air-base. This latter island, closest of the three to the Gilberts, became important as a reconnaissance centre.¹³

From these bases in the Ellice Islands photographic and bombing missions over the Gilbert Islands were stepped up from September 1943 and on the 18th and 19th of that month the carrier *Lexington* launched an air strike on Betio. Following the attack, in which several aircraft were damaged or destroyed on the ground, the Japanese withdrew all airworthy planes to the Marshalls, leaving only four reconnaissance sea-planes at Butaritari. The photographs taken by the *Lexington's* aircraft on this occasion gave 'sufficient information about the beaches and tides', or so the strategists believed, for D-Day to be planned for late November.¹⁴ This left little enough time for the final assessment of intelligence data, and for the co-ordination of the movement of troops, supplies and *matériel* from bases scattered across the vastness of the Pacific. But by the beginning of November it was done, and the 200 vessels and 100 000 men destined to take part in the central Pacific campaigns began to converge upon their targets.

The stage was set for Operation Galvanic — the assault on Japanese-held positions in the Gilbert Islands.

Butaritari, known to the Americans as Makin, was the northernmost target.¹⁵ Being closest to the Marshalls, it saw the heaviest concentration of naval power as a buffer against the eventuality of the Tarawa operation being jeopardised by the Japanese fleet. Butaritari itself was not strongly fortified and, of the total forces on the island (some 800 including 200 Korean labourers), no more than 300 were trained combat troops. They had some artillery but no heavy guns and neither naval nor air support. The task of taking the island was given to the US army, 27th Division, with more than 6000 soldiers supported by carrier strikes, naval guns and tanks.

The outcome was never really in doubt but a campaign that should have taken hours dragged into days. The troops landed without a great deal of opposition but with some delays caused by the state of the tide and the necessity of ferrying the men across the shallow waters of the reef in amphibious tractors. Thereafter, according to Morison, the 27th Division 'put up a miserable dilatory performance giving the enemy ample time to reorganise and dispute at every step'.¹⁶ Typical of the campaign was the advance from Ukiangang Point towards the main settlement at Butaritari village. Meeting with resistance from a small Japanese unit armed with rifles and a solitary machine gun, the crews of the tanks moving in support would not enter the fray without orders from their commander who was still back at the beach. At night the poorly led troops shot at shadows, whispering coconut fronds, and at each other. Holland Smith, Commanding General of the Marines in the central Pacific, chafed under the delay of this 'insignificant skirmish' which kept him separated from his men on Tarawa. He later recalled:

One of the worst nights I ever spent in the Pacific was at the Command Post ashore on Makin . . . This was the first time the 165th Regiment had been in action and I hoped the presence of Ralph Smith, their Commanding General, and myself would be a good influence on the sentries posted around camp. I was mistaken. Shots whizzed over my head from a 25-yard range, drilled holes in the command post tent and clipped coconuts off the trees.¹⁷

By the third morning there were few Japanese left alive on Butaritari, and Holland Smith could depart for Tarawa where his Marines had just waged and won one of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific war.

Compared with Butaritari, Tarawa was a formidable target.¹⁸ The ocean beaches presented natural hazards for landing in the form of coral heads and surge channels and, as intelligence reports had shown, the Japanese had added further obstacles intended to force any invading craft into predetermined firepaths for the many shore batteries. The beaches finally chosen for the landings, those designated Red Beaches 1-3 on the lagoon shore (see map, p.150), were less well defended but presented other difficulties — particularly

in the distance that men and supplies would have to be carried in small craft, and the fact that the last 500 to 800 metres to the beach were across a reef-flat over which landing craft could cross only on a high tide. Moreover this reef, like those of the ocean beaches, was covered by artillery, machine-gun and small-arms fire coming from emplacements which, like the bunkers further inland, had been built of thick reinforced concrete supplemented by layers of coconut logs, steel girders and soil.

The state of the tide was obviously crucial to the planning of the operation and to its execution. While the timing of the high tide was suitable on 19-20 November, this was during the neaps, when tides would be much lower than the spring tides experienced at full and new moons. Accurate tide tables were not available but most of the former colony residents and ships' officers consulted thought that the 1.5 metres of water needed could reasonably be expected. Against this consensus, one man stood out. He was Captain (later Major) F.G.L. Holland who, as headmaster of the King George V School, had lived on Tarawa since 1922. Holland was in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) with the convoy (he was to act as a liaison officer after the landing) when he learned that D-Day had been fixed for 19 (later amended to 20) November. He later recalled the consequent meeting with a number of high-ranking American officers including Admiral Harry S. Hill, who was to command the naval forces at Tarawa, and his marine counterpart, General Julian Smith:

I drew attention to the official 'Notes on Tarawa', prepared [by Holland and other GEIC residents] at Pearl Harbour, which gave 3 or 4 feet of water on the reef at Betio for about 4 hours, during high water springs, but only 1 or 2 feet during high water neaps. I added that often during neap tides before the war, Burns Philp at Tarawa could not work cargo, and had to await higher tides. I stressed my 20 years of experience of Tarawa conditions. I pointed out that neap tides would be at their very lowest, on the 19th and 20th. Two feet in my opinion was the maximum depth possible, not an inch more, and there was likelihood of less than this...

Admiral Hill then spoke at length, and most interestingly at that, on the natural phenomena that affected tides. He added that while not wishing to doubt my word, he still expected there to be about 4 feet of water on the reef at Betio, and referred finally to his luck, which had never deserted him.¹⁹

But at Tarawa, Hill's luck finally ran out; on 20 and 21 November 1943 the knee-deep waters of the Betio reef were stained with the blood of Marines forced to run the gauntlet ashore from landing craft held up at the reef edge. The situation might have been even worse, however, if General Julian Smith had not taken at least some notice of Holland. He warned the Marines that they might have to wade ashore and placed a greater stress than had been planned upon the use of amphibious tractors for the landing. These 'amtracks' as they were

called, were then only in the early stages of development and, despite some mechanical problems, had been used to carry supplies ashore at Guadalcanal. But only 125 (each capable of carrying twenty men) could be used in the Tarawa operation and even these few would not have been made available had not General Holland Smith overcome considerable opposition from the Navy.²⁰ And, if this was not enough, the first wave of Marines soon found that the naval and air bombardment that had preceded their landings had been unable to do more than inflict minor damage on the Betio defences.

As D-Day for Operation Galvanic dawned, the landing force was in position to the west of Tarawa. Their target, the islet of Betio, marks the south-western extremity of the atoll; it is no more than 3 km long, about 1 km wide, and rises nowhere to a height of more than 5 metres. It is separated from Bairiki, the adjoining islet by a tidal passage 5 km wide. The islet, though small, was heavily fortified and, at the time of the battle was occupied by nearly 5000 Japanese and Koreans, the Gilbertese having been removed to other parts of the atoll. Of these forces, some 1500 were from the élite Naval Landing Force, and more than 1100 were from the 3rd Special Base Force which had been sent to reinforce Tarawa in March 1943; the remainder, 1700 Japanese and 500 Koreans, were from construction units. After three days of battle the Americans had lost 1000 dead and 2000 wounded from the 18 000 men who had taken part in the landing; they could count as prisoners just one officer, sixteen enlisted men, and 129 Koreans—the others had all died in the defence of what Holland Smith was later to call this 'strategically useless coral strand'.²¹

By 9 a.m. on the 20th, Betio had been pounded with 3000 tonnes of explosives in counter-battery fire, a brief aerial bombardment and a more systematic naval bombardment. Then, because the first wave of amtracks took longer than expected to reach the shore, there was a lull of fifteen minutes following the bombardment which allowed the Japanese to emerge from their bunkers and re-man their guns. The assumption that the bombardment would be sufficient to soften the Japanese for the Marines landing proved, as Morison commented, to be 'a gross miscalculation'.²²

By the end of the first day, the worst of the carnage was over: half the defending force had been killed; of 5000 Marines who had reached the beach, 1500 had been killed or wounded. To show for their losses and their toil the Marines held, by the first night, a beach-head centred on the main pier and stretching 650 metres across Red Beaches 1-3 and extending inland about 250 metres. There was also a second, smaller beach-head established at the extreme west of the islet extending along Green Beach on the ocean reef from a toe-hold on Red Beach 1. It was little enough to hold, but that they held so much was a tribute to the training, spirit, and guts of the Marines. A performance matching that of the Army at Makin would have seen the annihilation of the attacking force. As it was, the early losses were so heavy that the reserve forces were committed to the battle on the first day and, when

landings resumed on the morning tide, casualties were again heavy. But at 4 p.m. on that afternoon the shore commander could report 'Casualties heavy; percentage of dead not known ... We are winning'.²³ By the evening of the 21st the Marines had thrust across the islet thus dividing the defending forces. On the 22nd, pockets of resistance were eliminated with tanks, grenades, and the scorching devastation of flame-throwers. The command post, still sheltering 300 Japanese including the Betio Commander, Rear Admiral Keijai Shibashi, was taken under cover of bulldozers which pushed rubble over all doors and gunslits before those inside were incinerated with petrol poured through air vents. The Marines were in no mood to take prisoners, nor was it safe to do so against desperate men who were determined not to be captured and considered death the more honourable if enemy lives could be taken as well. On the 23rd, a final sweep though the eastern end of the islet saw the final destruction of the defending force, and the island secured.

Holland Smith, finally released from his duties at Butaritari flew south and when he arrived at Betio he saw

boys who had lived yesterday a thousand times and looked older than their fathers. Dirty, unshaven, with gaunt, almost sightless eyes, they had survived the ordeal but it had chilled their souls. They found it hard to believe they were actually alive. There were no smiles on these ancient, youthful faces; only passive relief among the dead.²⁴

And what of the prisoners? Relief that they had survived the holocaust, or shame?

It took only a few more days before Operation Galvanic was complete. By the 27th the last snipers on Tarawa had been cleaned out, there had been a final clash with a small Japanese force at Buariki on North Tarawa and the handful of Japanese at Abemama had all committed suicide after brief resistance.

Operation Galvanic was a success, in military terms, but a costly one. Shocked by the casualty figures the American press and public questioned the adequacy of the air and naval support given the Marines; others questioned the wisdom of taking Tarawa at all. Certainly, when the post-mortems were made, the assumptions on tidal conditions were shown to have been grossly astray. Embarrassed by newspaper accounts of Marines wading ashore under heavy fire, Frank Knox, the US Secretary to the Navy, denied that the Navy had underestimated the Japanese strength at Betio. Rather,

Mr. Knox went on to explain the marines' difficulties as caused by the "sudden shifting of the wind," which unexpectedly lowered the waters around Tarawa and caused many landing craft to hang up on the coral reefs many yards from shore.²⁵

Such are the expedients of war.

But even if the Navy had not underestimated the strength of the Betio fortress, it had grossly overestimated the impact that its

bombardment would have on Japanese defences. This, indeed, was one of the main lessons learned at Tarawa; that to be effective both naval and aerial bombardments had to be much longer, much heavier, to use a higher proportion of armour-piercing shells and high-explosive demolition bombs, and to conclude with a systematic 'going over' of the entire target area up till the moment that the first wave of Marines hit the beach. The amtracks also proved their superiority over other craft under atoll conditions and became a major weapon in future amphibious landings.

The debate over the cost, and necessity, of the Battle of Tarawa was argued long after the war. General Holland Smith wrote in his memoirs:

The question is inevitable: Was Tarawa worth it? My answer is unqualified: No. From the very beginning the decision of the Joint Chiefs to seize Tarawa was a mistake and from their initial mistake grew the terrible drama of errors, errors of omission rather than commission, resulting in ...needless casualties.²⁶

Smith has found few backers for his conclusions and for his view that the Marines should have struck directly at Kwajalein in the Marshalls, a much more important base. The weight of opinion, and the evidence, supports the view that Tarawa had to be taken not simply because Kwajalein was 1100 km further from Allied air bases than Tarawa, and because bases in the Gilberts were essential to the success of the Marshalls operation, but because without the fundamental lessons learned at Tarawa, the assault on the even more heavily defended Kwajalein would have cost many more lives and might well have failed.

On 24 November, with Tarawa atoll secured, the American and British flags were raised side by side over Betio on a pair of denuded coconut palms; one flag signified the capture of the island, the other its return to the imperial fold. That the Stars and Stripes dwarfed the Union Jack was an unintentional but eloquent comment on the respective roles of the two powers in the following months. While the British officials were, in theory, given 'all latitude in governing the Gilbert Islands...consistent with the military situation',²⁷ they could, in practice, exert very little weight against the might of a military machine that made constant and increasing demands upon the resources and labour of the Gilbertese people. While Butaritari, Tarawa and Abemama were the only Gilbert Islands to be occupied by the Americans, other islands were drawn into the orbit of change by recruitment for the Labour Corps and by the sale of thatch and handicrafts on an insatiable market.

As the American bases in the Gilberts were established those in the Ellice group declined. On Funafuti, Nukufetau and Nanumea, where airfields had been built, many thousands of coconut and other food-bearing trees had been destroyed; to make room for the American

forces, Ellice Islanders were resettled on islets across the lagoons from their traditional homes; imported food issued as rations or given as payment for laundry services and handicrafts helped to compensate for the shortage of local food; these and other gifts, together with the wages paid to the men who worked on airfield and harbour construction, brought a new affluence to the islands. The same was generally true of the occupied Gilbert Islands. At Tarawa one-third of the land was taken for military purposes, the Japanese airfield on Betio was rehabilitated and another built at Bonriki, harbour passages were dredged, a mole built, and tent towns established. At Abemama, Major F.G.L. Holland found that from a local population of about 850, the women were fully occupied with the laundry for 8000 troops and the manufacture of handicrafts; thatch had to be brought in from other islands. All available men were employed and within a month Holland was recruiting for the Labour Corps from adjacent islands until more than 400 Gilbertese were building roads, a lagoon mole, fuel pipe-lines and storage facilities, quonset huts and warehouses. Butaritari witnessed changes of a similar magnitude. Altogether, more than 1200 men served in the Labour Corps—mostly in the Gilberts but one company of 395 men was sent to Guadalcanal in the Solomons. Wherever they served, the men of the Labour Corps made an impact on returning to their home islands, not simply with goods and cash-savings but also with the stories, often embellished, that were an essential part of their luggage. The capacity of the Americans to build an airfield in a week, for example, and the mass presence of foreigners, stood in stark contrast to the isolation and technological simplicity of pre-war days.²⁸

Uncle Sam brought affluence, but he also brought problems. The contrast between the power, wealth and numbers of the Americans, and the dependence and virtual impotence of the handful of British officials were not lost upon the Gilbertese: one official sourly commented that when Butaritari

contains several thousand United States troops, 1200 natives and 1 Britisher, the latter must find it difficult to "show the flag", especially when the food he distributes (and himself eats), the money with which he pays the natives, and the road and water transport on which he depends all hail from America.²⁹

The attractions of American wealth, and a reluctance to accept the reimposition of British authority, soon caused discontent in some occupied areas. At Butaritari, for example, an attempt to eliminate casual employment and to substitute a British-led labour corps was rejected by some villagers. They soon went further and led by Na Kaiea, the High Chief, repudiated the jurisdiction of the Native Court and demanded American sovereignty. A major cause of their dissatisfaction was the reconstitution of the Native Government after a lapse of three years and the insistence that the people should once again perform 'communal works'—the unpaid levy of fifty-two days

each year during which all adults were required to maintain public roads and buildings. A compromise, under which casual employment was continued and the Islanders agreed to accept the authority of the Native Government, held the island in an uneasy peace until June 1944 when a petition for American sovereignty was submitted by the Native Government. Despite a high incidence of irregularities among the appended signatures there was a clear preference for American rule which the discouragement of the US Commander did little to dispel. A further attempt by British officials to form a regular Labour Corps on the island resulted in a strike, but this soon dissolved once it became clear that American and British officials had no intention of backing down.

There were similar disturbances at Tarawa. There, the occasion for discontent was the exclusion of Gilbertese from all military areas unless they were actually employed, and the insistence that all trading in handicrafts should be handled through the District Office and the American service shops. In May and June 1944 several hundred Gilbertese marched on the Naval Air Base at Bonriki to ask the Commander to revoke these orders and to give them American sovereignty. On the second occasion, the police and a detachment of Labour Corps broke up the demonstration and, after most of those taking part had been prosecuted, the movement lost its impetus.³⁰

In part, this attempt to change allegiance can be explained in economic terms—by the preference for casual employment which brought greater rewards than the 25 cents a day paid in the Labour Corps, by the high prices paid on the black market for handicrafts, by the willingness of individual soldiers to pay good money for laundry and other services and to be generous with military property, and by the presents that could be given to or solicited by those with access to military areas. And there is no doubt, too, that there was a general acceptance of the fact that the Americans would soon depart and a belief, sometimes acknowledged as wishful thinking, that a transference of sovereignty might produce a permanent flow of wealth, even if on a reduced scale. In this view the Gilbertese were encouraged by many of the soldiers who were not slow to disparage British achievements in the islands and to match the official display of technology and distribution of largesse with their own willingness to share cash, food and consumer goods and to provide thrills with truck and boat rides. This, too, was important, because the Gilbertese could not help but compare this generosity and friendliness with the apparent poverty and aloofness of officials, traders and missionaries in the pre-war years. The Gilbertese had few illusions about the sources of this western technology, and their aspirations had little in common with the cargo cults of Melanesia, but they were, nonetheless, misled by their own perception of international affairs. Some misconstrued the statements of troops claiming possession by conquest; copies of the Atlantic Charter were circulated on Butaritari and the interpretations offered by activist soldiers promoting the new

world order encouraged the belief that subject peoples could choose their own masters.

Interestingly enough, there was no similar enthusiasm for American rule at Abemama. There, as at the other occupied islands, there was a constant flow of cash and goods from Americans to Gilbertese. On Abemama, too, drunkenness and prostitution became a problem and, when attempts were made to control private sales of handicrafts and access to military areas, a black market quickly developed. But the Abemamans were never as enamoured of the Americans as their fellow Islanders to the north. From the beginning of the occupation Holland was inundated with complaints of theft, vandalism, molestation and attempted rape. At Abemama it was more difficult to keep Gilbertese and Americans apart, and the American command seemed less sensitive to the implications of the tenfold increase in the island's population. This the Abemamans might have tolerated but their sympathies were soon alienated when, in anticipation of a visit from a high-ranking naval officer in mid-1944, all visible American military 'surplus'—beds, bedding, lamps, stoves and tools—was seized from Gilbertese homes, dumped on the reef and burned, with the residue being bulldozed into deep water.

By 1945 the war was over, and most of the Americans had left. Those Islanders who had lost trees and *babai* pits were compensated and on some islands the people considered financing their own resettlement from war-savings. Another legacy of the war was a small number of children fathered by Americans. Much more pervasive, and more obvious, were the legacies of Marston-matting designed for airfield construction now used for pig-pens; of corrugated iron and timber that were incorporated into a new generation of houses; of rusting aircraft, weapons and vehicles scattered along the beaches and among the trees. In the Gilbert Islands, a generation of children had not attended school or had forgotten much of what they had learned before. The Ellice Islanders, who had always placed a higher value on formal education, and had not been faced with Japanese harassment, had kept their schools open. The Ellice Islanders were further westernised by the occupation experience. They absorbed not only the material benefits but modified their attitudes as well. Many were imbued with a desire to seek a higher education, to travel, to do well, or to marry a European. As the horizons narrowed again after the war, the chances of meeting these ambitions faded, but through scholarships, employment in the civil service at Tarawa or in the phosphate industry at Ocean Island or Nauru, many were fulfilled. The Gilbertese responded differently. They were, as they had been from the early whaling days, keen to acquire western goods and prepared to make some changes in their lifestyle. But while they adopted western technology, and avidly pursued it during the occupation, they were not, in a sense, westernised by the experience. Rather, their observation of Europeans and European ways served to

reaffirm their conviction in the superiority of Gilbertese culture and their contempt for those of their fellows who tried to copy European ways. Once the temptations of the occupations were gone, the Gilbertese were again willing to accept the authority of the Native Governments, and to reaffirm their loyalty to the King and to the past. Their conservatism was matched by that of the British administration which supervised the replanting of wartime airfields so that the Gilbert and Ellice Islands should again be accessible only by sea.

In official thinking, the immediate post-war years in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were marked by an almost introspective concern with developing indigenous control over local affairs and local resources within the framework of customary institutions. There was an accompanying lack of awareness, sometimes a deliberate ignoring, of contemporary developments in international and imperial affairs. Thus the opportunity to encourage civil aviation was shunned, and the transference of political responsibility to locally elected legislatures elsewhere in the Empire was seen as having little relevance for the Pacific and none at all for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

Even during the Japanese occupation of the Gilberts, officials of the Western Pacific High Commission began to plan the Colony's future with an implicit confidence that British rule would soon be reimposed. In charge of the planning was Sir Philip Mitchell, Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. It was significant, perhaps, that Mitchell had spent many years in district administration (in Tanganyika) and that he tended to see administrative problems in terms of local government and their solution to lie in the devolution of responsibility to the localities. In Fiji, his ideas were in tune with those of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, the Secretary for Fijian Affairs, and so the Fijian Administration was refurbished and given a new lease of life. For the Gilbert and Ellice Islands he found a sympathiser in H.E. (Harry) Maude who, for more than a decade as a District Officer and Lands Commissioner in the Gilberts, had argued for the dismantling of centralised controls and the relaxation of paternalistic laws. Now, as an assistant to the High Commissioner, Maude was in a position to suggest the local application of Mitchell's ideas, and to flesh out the basic principles once they had been approved by the Colonial Office.

Mitchell at first wanted to abolish the separate colonial status of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and he sounded out the Colonial Office on the possibility of incorporating the Colony as a territory within the boundaries of Fiji. He pointed to the costs and vagaries of shipping, the expense of a separate centralised administration for so small a dependency, and the strength of the Native Governments. He favoured transferring as many responsibilities as possible to local councils, the creation of a sea-borne supervisory administration and the transference of secretariat and treasury functions to the High Commissioner. There was, he concluded, 'no useful purpose and

much avoidable expense in maintaining the G & EC as a Colony'.³¹

For this aspect of his proposals Mitchell found little support either in the Colonial Office or among his own staff. The latter, led by Maude, stressed the revenue derived from philatelic sales and also the importance that the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders attached to their separate colonial status. Mitchell confessed that he had 'great difficulty in believing this' but in the end, with the Colonial Office unwilling to countenance so drastic a change, it made no difference, and Mitchell was left to draft his formal proposals.³²

Fundamental to these was his belief that the Colony was over-governed for its size, population and resources. Moreover, he argued, the Colony should learn to live within its means exclusive of phosphate revenue, and should not base its development upon a wasting asset and the assumption of future dependency on United Kingdom aid. Accordingly, Mitchell argued, the Colony should be regarded as a 'Native Territory' in which Islanders should assume as much responsibility as they could handle and that it was the primary responsibility of the administration to train individuals and the community for this future role. While Mitchell accepted that a permanent European staff was essential, he wanted it restricted in size with most positions being filled by secondment on a short-term basis. To maximise supervision and training, and to discourage the growth of a centralised bureaucracy, he wanted to upgrade marine facilities and to have an essentially sea-borne administration. In keeping with the perceived limitation on development of such remote islands (large-scale exploitation of marine resources was not considered at this time), health and education services were to be modest. As a solitary step towards a future transference of political power the Resident Commissioner was to 'study the possibility' of establishing a consultative or legislative council.³³ Except in his preference for a land-based central administration Alexander Grantham, High Commissioner from 1945-7, generally agreed with his predecessor's proposals; he, like Mitchell, still expected that all senior officials would spend most of their time touring and Maude's administrative plan was drafted on this assumption.³⁴

In essence, Maude tried to provide for a smaller, cheaper, more efficient administration by stressing the devolution to local councils of power and financial responsibility, the mobility of expatriate officials, and an education and scholarship scheme that would allow a rapid localisation of the civil service. A high priority was placed upon the appointment of a commission to settle outstanding land disputes, the alleviation of population pressure through resettlement in the Line Islands, the expansion of co-operative trading societies and the launching of a Government Trade Scheme which was intended to forestall the return to the Colony of large commercial firms. For the headquarters, Maude favoured Abemama because of its central location, lagoon harbour and the availability of land. Finally, in a move that he hoped would allow the Islanders to move towards 'an

early political maturity', there was to be a Council of Representatives which would be given increasing powers as it gained in confidence.³⁵

All this planning was carried out almost entirely within the framework of the issues and problems facing the Colony as these were perceived by officials within the Western Pacific High Commission. Little serious consideration was given to nation-building, or to the ultimate transference of political power. True, there was to be a Council of Representatives that might serve as a vehicle for future political development, but this was to be a largely advisory body designed to integrate the activities of essentially autonomous councils. There was no thought given to a programme for decolonisation because such an eventuality, though recognised as the ultimate goal, was regarded as being so far in the future as to be unworthy of serious consideration. Mitchell called the Colony a 'Native Territory' and Maude referred to it as a 'native reserve', and it was a measure of the Colonial Office's preoccupation with more pressing issues elsewhere, and the extent to which it, too, saw the Pacific as a special case largely exempt from policies being applied elsewhere, that it not only allowed but encouraged development along these lines. The election of a Labour Government committed to guiding the dependencies to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth, a policy that implied that the transference of power need not be inhibited by under-development in the economic and social spheres, made little impact upon policies in the Western Pacific. Neither the granting of representative government to the Gold Coast under the Burns constitution of 1946 nor the independence of India in 1947 were seen as signposts likely to cause a future shift in direction. And the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, a measure born of violent protest against economic and social conditions elsewhere in the Empire, made similarly little impact. By this Act, first passed in 1940 and subsequently renewed at five-yearly intervals, Britain finally abandoned the principle that colonies should pay their own way and it thus represented the greatest shift in economic policy towards the Empire in more than a century. But so circumscribed were their visions of 'development' that officials could not fully appreciate the implications of this scheme for dependencies with non-viable economies. Their hopes did not extend beyond funds for reconstruction and for a small expansion of social services, and their expectations fell well short of this.

Perhaps, in the long term, it mattered little because the Western Pacific remained low on any list of Colonial Office priorities and it was not until the mid-1950s that significant funds flowed into the area under the scheme. Thus the officials were left with two basic inevitabilities—the artificiality of an economy based upon a diminishing asset, and the limitations of an atoll environment—both in conflict with the moral obligations implied in trusteeship. As Mitchell succinctly noted: 'the paradox remains that the more we do for them, the less sufficient for their needs will be their present limited

area of land, while, on the other hand, we cannot simply do nothing.' Development should be circumscribed, he argued, 'lest zeal for good works should end in no more than over-population, aggravated unemployment and disillusion.'³⁶

This caution was clearly reflected in the Ten Year Plan of Reconstruction and Development and Welfare approved in 1946:

The objectives of this Ten Year Plan are to rehabilitate the Colony from the effects of the war, to provide for the people new land sufficient to relieve the present overcrowding and to contain the natural increase in population for the next two generations, and to improve the Colony's social services so far as this can be done without incurring too great recurrent expenditure.³⁷

Again, the guiding hand of Maude, appointed Resident Commissioner in 1946, can be seen. As the architect of the Phoenix Islands Scheme of the 1930s, Maude was convinced that resettlement offered the only solution to the Colony's imbalance between population and resources. Thus reconstruction aside, the major item of expenditure in the Plan was \$A270 000 for the purchase and colonisation of Christmas, Fanning and Washington Islands. Altogether, from a total of \$A2 618 000 over ten years, reconstruction was to absorb some \$A900 000; the expansion of transport and communications facilities \$A600 000; and social services \$A360 000. A high priority was also placed upon a Lands Commission to cost \$A76 000. It was expected that for some social service and transport projects, recurrent as well as capital costs would have to be met from aid funds, as the Colony's own revenue, projected at \$A160 000 to \$200 000, would be unable to meet these.

In practice, however, the performance of the first post-war decade fell well short of the brave plans formulated between 1943 and 1946. Reconstruction of even the most basic facilities took much longer than expected. The Colony went into debt and became grant-aided and thus the victim of cheese-paring knives in the United Kingdom Treasury. There were delays in the release of funds, the Colony lacked the skilled manpower needed for such a large construction programme, or even to plan the programme in detail. It was not until 1952 that a start could be made on the building of a new Colony headquarters and high school. Until that time it was a case of making do with former military buildings and houses made from local materials. Tarawa, the scene of so much destruction in 1943, and host to American forces until 1948, was finally chosen as the new capital ahead of Abemama because of the military presence, the need to supervise reconstruction, and the superiority of its lagoon facilities over those of Abemama. With the inevitable preoccupation with reconstruction there was neither the time nor the staff to undertake the massive re-education programme envisaged in the Mitchell-Maude proposals. Indeed, so great were the problems of re-establishing even

the former level of administration that plans for a new deal in local government were dropped. The 1941 Ordinance, which accepted the dominance of the Native Magistrate as the agent of the District Officer but also tried to find a place for traditional leaders in the Courts, Land Courts and Island Councils, was introduced in its original form. The idea of a Council of Representatives was abandoned entirely.

Perhaps the physical magnitude and difficulties of the reconstruction programme had been underestimated in the planning; certainly there was little perception of the way in which the Colony was at once heavily dependent upon outside assistance and yet so much the victim of its own remoteness. Its rapid reversion to unimportance in the eyes of others meant that many plans for the future had to be put on one side just to re-establish basic facilities.

But there were achievements despite the difficulties. On the economic side, fears for the future of the phosphate industry were soon allayed by the re-occupation of Ocean Island in 1945 and the resumption of exports in August 1946. Copra, the basic staple of the village economy, also found good prices and a guaranteed market for ten years with the British Government. From a consumer point of view, the profits of retailing in the Colony were shared among the members of co-operative societies and those of wholesale importing were eliminated by the Government Trade Scheme.

Another issue resolved, at least for a time, was the future of the Banabans. Demoralised by the wartime occupation of Ocean Island, the decimation of their numbers through starvation and sickness, and their deportation by the Japanese to various islands in the Gilberts and Marshalls, the Banabans were in no shape to take up the fight against the BPC. And they could not return immediately to Ocean Island because their homes had been destroyed and a higher priority was placed upon the resumption of mining than on the rehabilitation of Banaban villages. The surviving Banabans, who numbered only 700, together with 300 Gilbertese who had married into the community, were gathered together and moved to Fiji where Rabi Island had been bought with Banaban funds. Since 1908, successive administrations had considered the removal of the Banabans from Ocean Island, and some had plotted for it; in 1945 it was finally achieved. But the Banabans still had a right to return to Ocean Island and it was not until 1947 that the community voted to accept Rabi as its permanent home. The subsequent visit to Ocean Island to mark boundaries and arrange the lease of their remaining lands to the BPC has become a major reference point in Banaban history.³⁸ At the time, this resettlement and the consequent land settlement were generally accepted as being equitable by the Banabans, the British Government and the BPC, but the issues of the price paid and the advice proffered or withheld later re-surfaced in litigation in the 1970s. In the 1960s the Nauruans' assumption of control over their phosphate industry and subsequent move to independence, gave rise to renewed Banaban agitation and a return to the bitterness of the 1920s.

In the 1940s the Banaban issue scarcely affected the Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders; from their point of view the major achievement of the immediate post-war period was undoubtedly the Lands Commission headed by B.C. Cartland in the Gilberts and A.G. Lake in the Ellice Islands. At last, all islands received the definitive settlement of disputes and the new lands codes that they had been promised when Grimble's first commission was established in 1920. But this focussing upon land claims, and the accompanying assessment of the size and fertility of thousands of land plots, raised again the issues of land use, land alienation and land hunger that had led to resettlement in the Phoenix Islands and the proposed scheme for the Line Islands. Maude believed that the populations of some islands had risen above an 'optimum' level, exceeded the capacity of local resources to support them, and that resettlement was the only practical solution.³⁹ Cartland, on the other hand, argued that resettlement would be costly, that the problem was not so much one of land area as of distribution. He believed that land hunger could be eliminated by a redistribution of population within the islands of the Gilbert and Ellice groups and by the systematic planting and exploitation of unused and 'waste' lands. These views, reported to the High Commissioner and to the Colonial Office in 1947, just at the time that Maude was strongly urging the purchase of Fanning and Washington Islands for \$A206 000, brought the resettlement scheme to a halt.⁴⁰ This reversal of a policy that he held dear on the advice of one so new to the Colony was largely responsible for Maude's disillusionment and his departure after twenty years in the Gilberts to work for the newly established South Pacific Commission. While the viability or otherwise of resettlement on Fanning and Washington has yet to be tested, subsequent events have shown that Cartland was mistaken in his perception of land hunger. While the redistribution that he suggested might have solved the problem in theoretical terms, Cartland placed insufficient weight upon customary attitudes to land, the measurement of its worth in cultural not financial terms, and the fact that most Islanders simply refused to so reject their heritage as to trade in land. With such a strong affirmation of existing tenure systems it was inevitable that inequalities of land ownership, fragmented holdings, and under-utilisation would continue and that indigenous values would frustrate this and other alien blueprints for 'development'.

While some may have disputed the resettlement solution put forward by Maude, no one has seriously doubted that the basic issue facing the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in the post-war years has been the inability of the island environment to sustain Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders with a reasonable subsistence and basic services. From the 1950s, the deficit between the resources and costs of island life has been met in part by the proceeds of phosphate mining, in part by aid, and in part with cash remittances from those who have found employment in the civil service, in the phosphate industry, or overseas. Despite these options, none of which could be readily

assumed in 1946, the authorities have, since the 1960s, again considered resettlement as a partial answer. But in the 1950s land hunger was no longer an issue for it was believed by Michael Bernacchi, Resident Commissioner from 1952 to 1961, that both government activity and the modernisation of island communities should be both circumscribed and controlled through a strong central government. Having established what he believed were essential services, Bernacchi called a halt on further development and instituted a savings campaign against the day when phosphate revenues ended. The savings continued to independence, but in the 1960s and 1970s there was to be a more adventurous use of locally raised revenue, and a more liberal use of aid funds flowing from successive United Kingdom Governments intent upon shedding their colonial responsibilities. Because difficulties of communication discouraged decentralisation, the fifteen years to self-government saw not only a rapid expansion of government activity but an explosive growth of population on South Tarawa, the capital, and the development, especially among the young, of a preference for urban living.

CHAPTER TEN

Policies for economic and social change

From 1908, when the fee charged for the Pacific Phosphate Company's licence was paid to local rather than imperial funds, the economy of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands depended heavily upon revenue derived from Ocean Island phosphates. The amount that the industry could be made to contribute to Colony revenue, the use to which phosphate revenues should be put, and the means by which they should be replaced after the exhaustion of deposits have been the dominant issues in economic planning since the Second World War. As services have been expanded, and lifestyles gradually westernised, it has become increasingly obvious that living standards on the outer islands — that is, all Gilbert and Ellice Islands except South Tarawa — could be maintained only when subsidised by cash remittances from Islanders in wage employment elsewhere, and that standards on South Tarawa, the capital, depended on wage employment financed largely by phosphate revenue and overseas aid. There has thus been a continuing debate on whether the income from phosphates should be saved or spent, and an accompanying series of strategies to cope with the revenue shortfall which would approximately coincide with independence.¹

Until the 1970s, phosphates generally accounted for about half the Colony's revenue with the industry's direct contribution rising steadily from about \$100 000 on 275 000 tonnes exported in 1950, to \$1 million on 375 000 tonnes in 1966, and \$3 million on 730 000 tonnes in 1973. Then, in the wake of the world-wide energy crisis of 1973-4, the price of phosphate which had been rising steadily in the 1970s increased more than four-fold in a matter of months; in 1975 the \$22.8 million received from 520 300 tonnes of phosphate exports dwarfed the \$2.5 million derived from all other sources. By 1977, however, production had dropped back to about 400 000 tonnes and this, because of a glut on the world market and lower prices, produced only \$8 million.²

At no stage could the Colony Government really control the levels of taxation on the phosphate industry, not simply because of its dependent status but also because of the unique position enjoyed by the BPC, and the British Government's dual role as colonial master and business partner with the Australian and New Zealand Government, both of which had a vested interest in maintaining low phosphate prices.

Increasingly, too, the profits had to be shared with the Banabans whose demands became particularly strident with the independence of

Nauru. This development was one that benefited the Colony as well as the Banabans, however, because it clearly demonstrated that between 1950 and 1964 Nauruan (and, by implication, Ocean Island) phosphates had been valued below their worth on a world market with the balance, in effect, being a subsidy for the farmers of Australia and New Zealand.³ Until 1966, taxation on the BPC and its employees was commuted and included in annual payments and royalties which amounted to about \$1 per tonne from 1954, \$2 per tonne from 1960, and nearly \$4 per tonne from July 1966. This latter increase was directly related to developments in Nauru where the phosphate industry came under Nauruan control from July 1967 with political independence following early in 1968. Thus ended the BPC's control of prices; from 1965 the value of Ocean Island phosphate was fixed according to the price fetched at Nauru. After deducting the cost of production for the BPC, the balance was divided in proportions of 85:15 between the Colony and the Banabans. From a few leases signed in 1973 the returns were shared equally—an indication of the strength of the Banabans' bargaining position, official sensitivity, and the reluctance of the Government to resort to compulsory acquisition as it had done in 1930. Under these revised arrangements, and with the boom in phosphate prices, payments to the Colony reached \$5 per tonne in 1969, peaked at \$40 in 1975, and dropped back to \$20 in 1977.⁴ Despite losing control over phosphate prices the BPC remained a law unto itself. When income tax became payable on the salaries of BPC staff, for example, the BPC simply reimbursed the payments and was allowed to charge the amount to the cost of production. Conditions for BPC employees at Ocean Island were of an enviable standard, those at the Melbourne headquarters were positively lavish. The Colony could not scrutinise BPC accounts in detail and had to accept statements of production costs at face value. As a consequence the BPC was always regarded by the Colony Government as a rival, even an antagonist, because of its apparent wealth and power and its influence upon developments within the Colony. With reduced extraction rates from 1976, the industry's life was prolonged, but only until 1979; hence the preoccupation with alternative sources of income.

Copra is the staple of the village economy. The imposition of a copra export duty has therefore been seen as the simplest and most equitable means of taxing those not in wage employment; the duty was fixed at 25 per cent of the f.o.b. value from 1946 until 1966 when it was dropped to 20 per cent. In compensation for this tax, which might appear a disincentive to production, the Government maintained a reserve fund to offset the worst fluctuations in world prices. Production has varied with climatic conditions and prevailing prices. A drought in 1956, for example, was followed by the lowest post-war exports of 2300 tonnes in 1957. In a few good years exports reached 10 000 tonnes with a record 11 450 in 1974 when prices also reached an all-time high of \$1000 per tonne on the world market. In that year

the Colony Government received nearly \$850 000 from export duty but in the following year prices fell, exports were halved, and the return to the Government slashed to \$127 862. Such extreme fluctuations were rare, however, and export duties generally produced between \$200 000 and \$400 000 annually over the period. At the same time, however, recurrent government expenditure climbed — from \$544 000 in 1950, to \$1.2 million in 1961, \$2.1 million in 1966, \$4.5 million in 1973 and \$9.5 million in 1976. Whereas copra export duty was the approximate equivalent of 30 per cent of recurrent expenditure in the mid-1950s, and about 20 per cent in the mid-1960s, it had fallen below 5 per cent in the mid-1970s.

Import duties lagged well behind copra duty as a revenue-earner until the mid-1960s when the payment of taxes on goods imported at Ocean Island combined with rapid urbanisation and an expansion of retailing on South Tarawa saw revenue from import duties climb to \$2.4 million by 1976. Of other sources of revenue—excluding government trading activities which usually had higher costs than earnings—only income tax contributed more than \$500 000 to revenue in 1976. While levels of revenue could not be predicted with any reliability, the cessation of that derived from phosphate could be fixed with some specificity and from the early 1950s this inevitability was the major factor in determining areas and levels of expenditure.

In August 1952 when Michael Bernacchi arrived in Tarawa as Resident Commissioner he was appalled at the state of his inheritance. Construction on the new Secretariat at Bairiki on South Tarawa had hardly begun; the Colony Hospital struggled on with primitive conditions and equipment at Abaokoro, North Tarawa; the King George V School was still at Abemama in temporary buildings. It was typical of Bernacchi that shortly after his arrival he went armed with a spade to Bikenibeu on South Tarawa, turned the first sod on the new high school site, and set the builders to work without waiting further for the clearance of funds or the arrival of materials; the new school was opened in June 1953. After the uncertainty of the immediate post-war years, Bernacchi brought a new forcefulness to the administration of the Colony. He had served in the Royal Navy from 1925 to 1934 and then in the colonial service in Fiji and Malaya. He placed a high priority upon reconstruction, which proceeded apace, and on the centralisation of administration and services on the islets of South Tarawa. The new Colony headquarters, planned for so long, was finally completed under Bernacchi's watchful eye. He, like William Telfer Campbell, believed in 'good order and cleanliness', and firm government control over dependent peoples. As an individual he responded to the challenge of power, and he exercised it with relish. Houses and gardens on Bairiki were carefully laid out, and kept in immaculate order in the knowledge that it might be the Resident Commissioner and not the village Kaubure who went on a tour of inspection. Bernacchi saw the tiny islet of Bairiki as the centre of his

Command and he referred to it affectionately as 'The Flagship' — others, less reverently, called it 'God's Little Acre'.

While the completion of the new King George V School in 1953 represented a minor triumph, there were few other educational achievements to point to in the decade after the war. In 1945 it had been agreed that a rapid expansion of education at all levels was essential if the localisation of the civil service was to be seriously considered. Accordingly, approval was given for a co-operative teacher-training venture with the missions; for government entry into the field of primary education; for the expansion of post-primary education for girls as well as boys; and, as a short-term measure, for a few selected students to be sent to Fiji and New Zealand.⁵ Two further expatriate teachers, a doubling of the educational establishment, were to be recruited to help fulfil these aims. The positions were not advertised for several years however as the High Commissioner's education adviser favoured the sending of post-primary pupils to Fiji. Over a hundred boys were sent overseas between 1945 and 1952 but with mixed success. Generally, Ellice Islanders, with the legacy of Kennedy and the benefit of their own wartime initiatives, did better than Gilbertese students, among whom rejection on academic and disciplinary grounds was common. Successive Directors of Education from the Colony maintained that it was a waste of time and money to send boys to Fiji until the quality of primary education had been improved to the point where those selected could understand instruction in English. Even with the expansion of King George V School in the 1950s and the phasing-out of overseas schooling, there was no dramatic improvement because of the lack of a strong foundation in the primary system.⁶

In this area, the quality of education had long been determined by the contribution the missions were prepared to make. In 1946, for example, about 8000 pupils attended more than 200 village schools of which only one in ten received government assistance. Under the scheme introduced after the war, the missions were to train teachers to government standards before appointing them to subsidised schools. But from the Government's point of view the scheme turned out to be costly and difficult to administer, and had no discernible effect upon the quality of primary education. Moreover the LMS declared its intention of abandoning the field of mass education for its adherents and this, given the strength of religious feeling on many islands, forced the Government to begin its own teacher-training programme and to establish schools of its own. The LMS did not withdraw as soon as expected, however, largely because of a vigorous expansion programme undertaken by the Roman Catholic mission at a time when the Government could not hope to provide an alternative for most children. The Government's entry into primary education had scarcely begun, however, when it was curtailed for financial reasons and because of 'broader implications'.

The major critic of the scheme was the new High Commissioner, Sir

Robert Stanley. Stanley was the first High Commissioner to reside in Honiara and to hold his position separate from the Governorship of Fiji. With over-riding responsibility only for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, the New Hebrides and the Solomons, he could give much more detailed attention to their affairs than could his predecessors. There were shades of McClure and Grimble as Stanley argued for selective education for specific civil service vacancies and an abandonment of the principle of improved education for all:

“Development” in the Colony ... must be closely related to the provision of educational facilities. A speedy expansion of educational facilities on a broad front might well achieve the desired result of producing sufficient educated natives for employment in the higher ranks of Government departments in a relatively short time but once embarked upon the full consequences of such a preference would have to be faced and it is therefore desirable to consider the objectives very carefully and, as far as more advanced education is concerned, to relate proposals to foreseeable requirements and opportunities for employment either within or outside the Colony.⁷

In the light of Stanley's reservations only five of the new schools were established in each of the Gilbert and Ellice groups and those, together with the existing government schools on Tarawa and Ocean Island, became the main contributors to King George V School. At the same time, the establishment of a girls' high school, regarded as a high priority since 1945, was further delayed until 1959.

This cutting of education expenditure in the 1950s was part of a wider campaign to restrict the Colony's recurrent commitments to the level of its income in a future without phosphate. Economic planning was also influenced by the knowledge that the copra contract with the United Kingdom would expire in 1957, and the expectation that copra revenue would be sharply reduced once the Colony had to sell on the open market. Thus basic capital developments — the administrative headquarters, the hospital, the high schools, and Betio harbour — caused few problems because they could be financed from Colonial Development and Welfare grants, but projects with a high recurrent cost — educational and medical services for the outer islands, for example, were held back from the development programme for 1955-60:

The programme is largely concerned with the improvement of social services and increasing the efficiency and economy of the administration rather than economic development. The extent to which social services can be developed is limited by the fact that no substantial increase in the Colony's revenue can be hoped for and it is necessary to provide for the recurrent costs of all new developments from the Colony's revenue at the end of the programme. This considerably restricts the possibilities for using Colonial Development and Welfare funds for the

improvement of social services and particularly for medical services. The programme aims to secure economies in administration as a result of better communications and the ultimate replacement of European officials by officers of local origin. In order to achieve this substitution it is necessary to spend considerable sums on training local staff and improving the educational facilities in the Colony to ensure the continued supply of educated local staff. At the same time the measures in this direction are limited by the recurrent cost of educational services and the present programme is based on a compromise between these two conflicting requirements.⁸

In 1943 Mitchell had argued that any temptation to perform good works should be tempered by the realisation that development would generate expensive expectations;⁹ in the 1950s that temptation was steadily resisted.

The proposed development plan of 1955, like that produced in 1946, was hardly worthy of the name. Rather, it was a shopping list of social service projects that the Government hoped to finance from Colonial Development and Welfare funds. The first priority for the period 1955-60 was given to securing 'economies in administration as a result of better communications' and hence the proposed expenditure of \$341 700 from a total of \$843 600 on the improvement of harbour and shipping facilities. Other major items were \$203 700 for medical services (mostly for the construction of the Colony Hospital which was still in temporary buildings); \$100 000 for education (mostly for the building of a girls' high school and a small teacher training scheme); and a mere \$50 000 for agriculture.¹⁰ This latter project had been born of a 1951 survey by Dr René Catala of the natural resources of the Gilbertese atoll environment and their exploitation by the Islanders.¹¹ On the basis of Catala's findings the South Pacific Commission wanted to share in the foundation of an agricultural research station which would cost the Colony some \$200 000 over fifteen years. To Bernacchi, this was unnecessary but he did concede the need for some small research station (hence the \$50 000 spread over five years) which might raise dietary standards through the improvement of coconut groves and the rearing of pigs and poultry. But, he added, 'It is essential that any such scheme should be kept from becoming over-ambitious and that it should, therefore, be established within easy reach of Colony headquarters'.¹² The statement reveals not only Bernacchi's obsession with keeping central government activity where he could watch it, but also the continuation of a line of thought that had pervaded the thinking of officials since the beginning of the 20th century. It was believed there was little point in teaching the Islanders how to grow coconuts, that no other form of productive economic activity was possible within an atoll environment, and that the sea was a resource only from a subsistence point of view. Even Bernacchi's modest proposal for an agricultural station was killed on the grounds of insufficient prospects

of any 'results of value'.¹³

This same philosophy was carried over into the planning for the next development period to cover the years 1959 to 1964. Nearly 60 per cent of the projected expenditure of \$1.1 million was allocated to shipping and harbour developments and for the blasting of reef passages on the outer islands; 10 per cent was allocated to a teachers' training college; and smaller amounts for the training of medical staff and, finally, for a small coconut improvement scheme.¹⁴

The restriction of development once basic services had been provided was only part of Bernacchi's response to an uncertain economic future. For the longer term he proposed the creation of a reserve fund out of savings during the lifetime of the phosphate industry, so that in future years the interest on investments would help to offset any budget deficit. Thus the Revenue Equalisation Fund was established in 1956 with \$155 580 from the sale of assets from the Japanese occupation, and \$400 000 from the Colony's general balance.¹⁵ By 1962, when Bernacchi's term of office ended, the Fund stood at \$1.5 million while ordinary expenditure was in the vicinity of \$1.2 million and revenue from all sources excluding phosphate and aid could cover only \$900 000 of this. The reserve fund, though based on conservative principles, represented the first positive step that had been taken to safeguard the Colony's financial future.

The decade of Bernacchi's Resident Commissionership had as its other major achievement the completion of post-war reconstruction and the establishment of some new services — most notably seen in boys' and girls' high schools, a teachers' training college, a new hospital, a small-ship harbour at Betio, and an administrative centre. All these developments took place on South Tarawa. Given the state of communications in the 1950s it would have been difficult for it to have been otherwise but Bernacchi was also a centralist by nature. Thus when it came to building the girls' high school, planned initially for Funafuti in the Ellice Islands, a Tarawa site was eventually chosen. True, locating the girls' school next to the King George V School made for some savings but centralisation on Tarawa also caused some discontent on the outer islands, especially in the Ellice Islands where parents resented having to send their children to the Gilberts for post-primary education. However the fact that the Colony embraced two distinct peoples had little effect on policy-formation in the 1950s; there was South Tarawa, the centre of government, and there were the outer islands. Nor could the outer-islanders travel to Tarawa to see, or share in, the benefits of development. South Tarawa was effectively closed to all Islanders except for those (with their families) who owned land on the island or were employed by the Government. Unrestricted movement and uncontrolled urbanisation were not in Bernacchi's scheme for his Colony.

By the time Bernacchi had taken up his position in 1952, exports had been re-established after the disruption caused by the war, taxes could be collected, and grants-in-aid for the recurrent budget were

not required after 1950. In 1955 the Colony was released from Treasury control and this gave officials in the Colony greater freedom in determining policies and priorities. At the same time, however, they had to deal with High Commissioners who held even more strongly than Bernacchi the view that development with a substantial future commitment should be avoided. In their defence, if a defence is needed, it is worth noting that the Colonial Office also encouraged the reserves policy while forcing the Colony to accept part of the cost of such essential but expensive items as an inter-island cargo and administration vessel. There was no sense of urgency, nor indeed any real interest discernible in Colonial Office attitudes towards the Pacific in the 1950s. Rather, there was a negative, cost-cutting approach towards development and welfare schemes, and a cautious, conservative response on other matters. There was little in the way of leadership, or of initiatives towards decolonisation, or of the type of development that might give an economic underpinning to statehood for small dependencies.

It was consistent with this state of affairs that the next important shift in policies for the GEIC should come not from London but from the Colony's new Resident Commissioner, V.J. (Val) Andersen, who became Resident Commissioner in April 1962 after Bernacchi's retirement. Andersen was a New Zealander who had joined the colonial service in 1947 after serving with the Royal Navy during the Second World War. He had spent fifteen years in the Solomons rising to the position of Secretary for Protectorate Affairs in 1958. Within three months of his arrival in the Colony, Andersen had switched the basis of planning for economic and social change:

... one vital point ... is that we must plan for what we think the Colony really needs and then look round for funds, materials and bodies — in other words let us not tailor our planning to our funds but plan for what we need and then scratch for the funds.¹⁶

The most obvious source of finance was the phosphate industry. While Andersen did not actually draw on the Revenue Equalisation Fund, there were no additions of capital between 1963 and 1967. Andersen believed that development should be maximised during the years of plenty so that when the phosphates were exhausted the Colony, even if not financially self-sufficient, would have the basic level of services required for self-government — the perceived minimum being at a level decidedly above that envisaged by Bernacchi. To derive maximum benefit from such resources as were available, the prospects for improved copra production, a fishing industry, handicraft sales, tourism, and increased philatelic sales were all to be investigated. Some attention was paid to the constant dilemma caused by the population:resource imbalance by the introduction of a family planning campaign and a renewed interest in resettlement.

The 1963 census showed that there were some 36 500 Gilbertese and

nearly 6000 Ellice Islanders resident in the Colony. On some islands in the southern Gilberts copra income could account for less than 20 per cent of purchases through the co-operative trade store; and this indicated the extent of dependence on remittance income especially from Ocean Island and Nauru where more than a thousand Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders were employed.¹⁷ For the future, Andersen favoured a dual emphasis upon increased short-term labour migration combined with permanent overseas resettlement.

When the Phoenix and Line Islands schemes were being planned in the 1930s it had been assumed that Gilbertese in particular would not adapt well to a relatively fertile high island environment and hence the preference for the central Pacific atolls within the Colony's boundaries and for similar islands elsewhere in the Pacific. But in 1954 the settlement on Sydney Island was abandoned because of a permanent water shortage and the settlers, together with another group from the southern Gilberts, were moved to Gizo in the western Solomons. Despite some teething problems the venture was a success. As Andersen saw the situation, the remaining settlements on Hull and Gardener Islands had become a liability:

The Colony is . . . saddled with the need to administer the Phoenix Group and the Line Islands, neither of which contribute greatly to the income or population of the Colony and both of which are expensive and difficult to administer.¹⁸

When a drought hit the Phoenix group in 1963, and relief measures became necessary, a hasty withdrawal from the Phoenix in favour of a new settlement on Wagina near Gizo was staged although the islands had clearly recovered by January 1964 when the exodus took place and the settlers themselves could see little reason for the move. The primary factor was the cost and inconvenience of administration, however, and the Government had succeeded in off-loading an expensive burden. Although the High Commissioner, with responsibility for both the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and the Solomons, could ease the passage of resettlement schemes until the mid-1960s, such migration became less popular with both planners and politicians in the Solomons from that time. Under the completed schemes, some 1400 Gilbertese (most of them from the Phoenix settlements) were resettled in the Solomons between 1954 and 1964.¹⁹

As part of his campaign to make Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders more mobile, perhaps more marketable, in a wider world, Andersen pressed strongly for improved education facilities and for greater stress upon the teaching of English. Another essential part of his overall scheme was that the Government should have a localised civil service, for which English was essential, and it was hoped also that English might become *lingua franca* for both Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders and thus serve to minimise cultural differences between them. Here, then, was a return to the policy of 'education for change' first advocated by Kennedy and Holland in the 1920s. With the

prospect of the LMS's withdrawal from primary education it was clear that the Government would not simply have to meet the cost of improving the quality of education but would have to become actively involved at the village level. At this point there was opposition from the High Commissioner, Sir David Trench, who questioned both the cost of the exercise and the necessity for compulsory and universal education.

To resolve the impasse, an education adviser from the Colonial Office visited the Colony in 1964. The resulting report and policy statement made all too clear the consequences of a parsimonious approach over two decades, the duplication of effort by Government and missions which dissipated scarce resources, and the perpetual difficulties of scale resulting from geographical fragmentation. It was found in the primary system, for example, that in 255 schools there were only 95 qualified teachers for 12 000 pupils; that, as a consequence, less than one-third of the pupils were receiving an education in any way satisfactory; and that an even smaller proportion from a few selected schools had any realistic chance of even aspiring to post-primary education. The costs and difficulties of communication between Tarawa and the outer islands, and the policies of centralisation followed in education as in other fields, made for inadequate supervision and in-service training of teachers after graduation. To remedy this situation, it was decided to further subsidise the expansion of the Roman Catholic mission's primary schools, and to amalgamate under the control of the Island Councils all other primary schools formerly controlled by Government or the LMS. In both the new consolidated schools, and the Roman Catholic schools, the Government was to make grants towards capital and running costs and towards the salaries of qualified teachers. As a major innovation, English was to be the medium of instruction for the approved six-year course in all subsidised primary schools.²⁰

Many of these new developments were financed by Colonial Development and Welfare grants, and education absorbed about one-third of all aid received through most of the 1960s. But in this field, as in others, the funds allocated fell well below expected levels. Even so, the Colony was not able to handle all of the grants it received, and in the 1960s grants were fixed more by the Colony's capacity to spend than by the perceptions of need held either by the Colony or by the Colonial Office. Aid grants increased steadily from \$192 000 in 1964, to \$467 000 in 1966, and to \$671 000 in 1967. With exceptional expenditure on a new broadcasting service, staff housing and shipping in 1968, the total spent exceeded \$900 000. Nearly one-third of this sum, however, was for a high-density passenger vessel for inter-island traffic and for carrying migrant labourers to Ocean Island and Nauru. Another project which showed little direct benefit in the Colony's accounts but, like the phosphate industry, brought many thousands of dollars in cash remittances to village economies was the Merchant Marine Training Scheme established in 1967 with assistance from the

United Kingdom, the United Nations and sponsoring (mostly West German) shipping lines. Graduates from the scheme were guaranteed employment by the sponsor companies. By 1970 remittance income to the Gilbert and Ellice groups from these men, and those employed at Ocean Island and Nauru, exceeded \$700 000 a year and, on a national basis, accounted for 10 per cent of *per capita* income.²¹

As the Government continued with the centralist policies begun by Bernacchi and at the same time began to ease the restrictions upon inter-island migration, the population of South Tarawa increased rapidly, from 6100 in 1963 to 10 600 in 1968.²² The attractions were obvious: better schools, better medical facilities, the chance of wage employment, and the social appeal of life in a growing urban centre. With this growth, there was obvious inconvenience in having different government activities on separate islets — in essence district administration and communications on Betio, the Secretariat on Bairiki, and social services on Bikenibeu. By 1963 causeways linked Bairiki and Bikenibeu and by 1964 roads and causeways stretched a further 8 km beyond Bikenibeu to Bonriki in time for the opening of the new airport to flights from Fiji via Funafuti. A more ambitious project, to build a causeway from Bairiki to Betio, estimated to cost \$500 000, was deferred because of a lack of funds. On the outer islands, too, causeway building was encouraged and subsidised by the central government in the interests of administrative convenience and in the hope that ease of access would encourage landowners to exploit scattered holdings more intensively.

The policies followed from 1962 to 1967 saw a heavy concentration upon social services centred on South Tarawa. Inevitably, these policies also caused an increase in the numbers of Europeans in the civil service. Between 1946 and 1964 the number of expatriates employed had been stable at about fifty. By 1968 the overall number of expatriates had climbed to seventy-eight, by 1970 it exceeded 100, and expatriates accounted for 11 per cent of established civil service positions.²³ Inevitably, too, a number of expatriates were hired to build houses, or to provide educational and medical services for other expatriates. With increased numbers of expatriates, there was an increased concern with localisation, and more expatriates were hired to train Islanders to take over positions held by Europeans. With such an expansion of government activity about one-half of expatriates held administrative or non-professional positions. By 1976 the numbers of expatriates employed directly by the Government or in those sections of the Development Authority that had evolved out of government departments had increased to nearly 200. Through the 1960s and 1970s there was a constant procession of advisers through Tarawa; 'experts' who left in their wake an ever-increasing pile of reports, many of which never got beyond the dust-gathering stage. There was a new sense of purpose in government activity, but also a tendency for projects to be implemented in isolation rather than as part of an overall plan.

From the late 1960s, there was a more obvious concern with economic development, and less emphasis upon social services, because of a significant policy change on the part of the United Kingdom Government. From the late 1950s the British Conservative Government — and, indeed, the Labour Opposition as well — had begun to see the future of colonies in terms of independence rather than self-government, with the timing of independence to be fixed more by political than by social or economic considerations. In a few short years, beginning with the independence of Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) in 1957 and culminating in Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' speech in South Africa in February 1960, the trends established since the war were irrevocably confirmed, and the ultimate destiny of the Empire was determined. So rapidly did decolonisation proceed that in 1964 Harold Wilson, the new Labour Prime Minister, abolished the Colonial Office and combined its political functions with those of the Foreign Office to establish the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and established the Ministry of Overseas Development to take responsibility for all economic assistance to developing countries. At first, in the Pacific dependencies, the only real evidence of the change was a new urgency in constitutional advancement and a greater willingness to provide Colonial Development and Welfare funds.²⁴

But from the late 1960s, the Ministry of Overseas Development took a much closer interest. The planners took the view that social services had been built to a level that was politically acceptable but probably beyond the means of island economies to support. Thus there was a slowing down on social service projects and a new emphasis on channelling aid towards projects that would produce a direct economic return. The overriding intention was to match political independence with economic independence.

As a part of this new interest in the affairs of the Pacific dependencies, a socio-economic survey of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony was commissioned. Members of the survey team, led by Sir George Mooring, a former Financial Secretary for Nigeria, spent about two months in the Colony towards the end of 1967. Their report, released in May 1968, was an impressionistic document, a compendium of basic information with general rather than specific conclusions and recommendations. However the report does mark a new phase in British policy towards the Colony and the first stage of a transition from shopping lists to development planning. The emphasis of future policy was made clear:

The tightness in the current financial position means that it will not be possible to spend development funds on any substantial expansion of services, or the infrastructure, unless this contributes to production and thereby provides extra funds to meet the increased recurrent expenditure which will be involved. ...The expenditure which seems particularly necessary to encourage increased production is primarily on agricultural

investigation and improvement, and also on fisheries and the possibilities of industrial development; on improved communications... and on an education system which makes it possible for Gilbertese to be trained in sufficient numbers to run their own country with the minimum of outside assistance and which provides the opportunity of literacy for all of the population... In particular we would suggest — while recognising that as the administrative and commercial centre of the territory the position of South Tarawa is unique — that the provision of amenities there in order to attract and retain expatriate staff who are needed for administration and development should be balanced carefully against the undesirability of having a concentration of “infrastructure” of roads, buildings, etc. in that area which is too far in advance of that in any of the other islands.²⁵

The mission's most important specific recommendations were for a resumption of contributions to the Revenue Equalisation Fund at the rate of one-quarter of receipts from phosphate taxation and the formation of a Development Corporation to combine the most important functions of the Wholesale Society (which had replaced the Government Trade Scheme in 1955), the Marine Department, the Public Works Department and other utilities.

When the Mooring Report was presented, it was believed that the Colony had, at most, a decade to get its house in order. And yet it was also clear that it lacked the capacity to plan and pursue the proposed developments. It was not alone in this regard and the Regional Development Planning Unit was constituted for the three Western Pacific territories. The Unit — comprising a former colonial servant and two professional economists — caused a degree of discomfort in that some officials believed that their own role in policy formation was being usurped by the Unit which had direct links with the Ministry of Overseas Development. That discomfort turned to embarrassment and in some cases to anger, when the two economists completed their draft development plan (without the concurrence of their colleague) and, at the same time that they formally gave copies to the Government, distributed copies to the elected members of the Governing Council and to Heads of Departments.

The draft plan was an abrasive document, highly critical of a wide range of governmental activity and inactivity. Particularly singled out for attention were: policies of expanding services and infrastructure on Tarawa; the failure to investigate the productive potential of natural resources; the lack of agricultural development; the low calibre of graduates from the education system despite an enormous growth in expenditure; the failure to tie education policy to manpower planning; the absence of any serious attempt to localise the civil service; the overcentralisation of administration; the control of professional officers in departments by non-professionals in the Secretariat; poor co-ordination among government departments; and the refusal to give local politicians or civil servants any real

consultative role in policy formation.²⁶

The draft plan amounted to blanket indictment of government policy over two decades. It was true that priority had been given to the development of infrastructure and social services but it was also true that this represented the perceived limit of development in atoll territories, and that policies within the Colony had been in accordance with Colonial Office directives. Colony officials were, in a sense, being criticised for not anticipating a major shift in policy by the British Government. There were, nonetheless, areas in which the Colony Government was vulnerable to criticism — in particular for the failure of most expatriate officials as individuals, and the Government of which they were a part, to grasp the implications of constitutional advancement towards self-government and the implied commitment to localise not only the civil service but also policy formation and decision making. Local members of parliament had titles, and a defined status, but they were not in any real sense involved in government; rather, they were regarded as a necessary hindrance to be tolerated but not consulted. And the Secretariat was undoubtedly over-staffed and acted as a restraint on development. As government activity had expanded, and the number of government departments increased, the appointment of professionals to those departments had been matched by a parallel increase in Secretariat officials to guide and control their activities. It was true also that officials had been primarily concerned with administration, and sometimes with policy formation; but not with planning. It was not until 1969 that a Development Secretary was appointed (in the Secretariat), and his first task was to rewrite the draft plan that it might become a public document.

The resulting Plan, approved by the House of Representatives in May 1970, represented the first attempt to formulate a comprehensive and integrated blueprint for the social and economic development of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony.²⁷ The main thrust of new development was to be in agriculture. The basic research that had been completed showed that the average annual copra production of some 6000 tonnes from the Gilbert and Ellice groups could be at least doubled if rat damage, estimated to cost one-quarter of production on some islands, could be eliminated, groves thinned, old trees replaced, and the entire crop harvested instead of nuts on distant lands being left to rot. Thus subsidies were to be paid to encourage co-operative development of small holdings. As a new departure, a fisheries officer, the Colony's first, was appointed in 1970 and then, in 1971, the Colony signed a joint research and fishing agreement with Van Camp, the American seafood conglomerate. At a time when Japanese interests were prepared to pay, and pay handsomely for such privileges, the Colony accepted an obligation to meet half the development costs. The venture did not get beyond the preliminary stages, however, as most of the vessels being used to assess the potential of Colony waters were destroyed in Funafuti lagoon by

Hurricane Bebe in October 1972 and the scheme died with them. Other alternatives were considered but beyond small-scale experimentation with fish-farming and with local species that might prove suitable as bait-fish for a skip-jack tuna industry, there was no significant advance until 1978 when an agreement with Japanese interests was signed in anticipation of a 200-mile economic zone being declared at independence. By this time it had become clear, however, that while fisheries might prove an important source of future income, earnings would not replace those from phosphate. Another prospect pursued with similar enthusiasm, but with even fewer signs of success was the development of Christmas Island which had again become a copra plantation after being used for nuclear bomb tests in the 1960s. There, it was proposed to cultivate brine shrimp in salt-water ponds for the aquariums of America and to establish the island as a tourist resort with facilities for deep-sea game fishing. A tracking station for communications satellites was built on the island, and this development helped to finance the building of a hotel, but there were few other significant returns before self-government. Potential aside, the importance of Christmas Island, like Fanning and Washington, continued to lie in its copra plantations.

Thus the new drive for a higher yield from natural resources was hardly a spectacular success. There was a steady improvement of coconut groves, and some replanting, but developments in this area were frustrated in part by the Islanders' assumption that land that produced sufficient coconuts for subsistence with a small surplus for sale did not warrant the effort of improvement, especially when this involved the thinning of groves and the destruction of apparently healthy trees. And, in many cases, the steady flow of remittance income — so important to Islanders' cash incomes and to the Colony's overseas earnings — made intensive agriculture unnecessary. In other cases, village agriculture no longer offered an attractive lifestyle while the continued growth of government activity on South Tarawa held out the prospect of wage employment. Thus the rate of urbanisation accelerated and the Government, perforce, was obliged to divert development funds into the provision of further services.

South Tarawa, more than ever before, became a vast sponge, soaking up the resources of the Colony. From 1963 to 1973, the population of the outer islands remained more or less constant at a little below 43 000 while in the same period South Tarawa effectively absorbed the entire population increase. The population of the islets from Betio to Bonriki, encompassing at one extreme the Colony's main port, and at the other its main airport, rose from 6100 in 1963 to 14 861 (with more than 6300 on Betio alone) in 1973.²⁸ By this latter year South Tarawa had become home for some 25 per cent of the total population and the implications for government expenditure were obvious. To take but a single example: in 1967 the Colony Government was advised to spend \$1 000 000 on sewage disposal and the improvement of water supplies for South Tarawa.²⁹ Under the

revised priorities no immediate action was taken, however, and in the drafting of the 1970-72 Development Plan expenditure in this area was trimmed to \$180 000. Yet within two years a reduction of water supplies caused by drought forced the Government to import water from Australia and then to embark upon a crash programme of building shallow galleries for water collection on unpopulated areas of the atoll and piping the water to distribution points. No action at all was taken on sewage disposal and the Government continued to rely on septic tanks (mostly in sand, at best in very porous soil) for European-style houses, and communal reef-latrines for 'local' houses. In 1977 an outbreak of cholera took seventeen lives and prompted an acceleration of a \$2.5 million sewerage scheme which was not completed until 1981.

Other areas of social welfare spending also suffered at the hands of the planners. In May 1969, for example, the Director of Education tabled a draft education policy in the House of Representatives. The main development proposed was the creation of senior primary schools, intended to raise the intake standards of the high schools while also occupying idle teenagers who would not go on to more advanced education but were neither old enough to be employed nor fully occupied with family chores or responsibilities. The Acting Financial Secretary, who held the substantive position of Development Secretary, made the new position clear:

In a territory with limited resources the unpalatable fact will have to be faced that in future it will probably not be possible to educate every single child. And as the population increases, more and more children will be born who have no chance of either schooling or a wage earning job. Unless an economic miracle takes place, the aim of universal education will have to be abandoned.³⁰

Despite support for the proposed schools from the elected members of the House, the paper was withdrawn and a compromise later adopted. Universal education was retained and the basic primary programme was extended from six to nine years but at the same time a higher proportion of costs, including salaries, were off-loaded onto Island Councils and the missions.

Much of the development that did take place between 1972 and 1976 was the responsibility of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Development Authority—the development corporation first suggested by the Mooring Report in 1968. With responsibility for shipping and transport, public works, importing, boat-building, engineering services and a host of other activities, the Development Authority became an unwieldy combination of divisions which, taken collectively, seemed to rival the power and assets of the Government itself. Enjoined to operate on commercial principles—despite being financed and indirectly controlled by Government—the Authority began to apply actual costs and charges and to dismantle the hidden

subsidies inherent in government activity. But it also inherited all the inefficiencies, duplications and over-staffing of the Wholesale Society and the departments it replaced, and then compounded these problems with its own. Originally intended to streamline government activity, the Authority became an all-consuming monster.

The nature of the problem is easily illustrated. In December 1973 when one Member of the Legislative Council asked how much the Government had to pay the Authority for a bag of cement, the Chief Secretary replied:

The F.O.B. price Suva is \$1.28 per bag, the freight from Suva to Tarawa is \$1.94, the freight levy [to equalise freight charges to all islands] is 60 cents, lighterage is 40 cents and the insurance is a further 5 cents. The landed cost is therefore \$4.27 and on this there is a 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % mark up to cover the costs of the Supply Division and a contribution towards GEIDA Headquarters costs, giving a cost of \$5.69, less a 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ % discount to Government, giving a price of \$5.31 per bag of cement ex-stores.³¹

In answer to a supplementary question seeking an investigation of this 'very unreasonable and frightening price', he added that:

the Government does not actually purchase cement from the Development Authority but costs on the above basis are costed into projects.³²

It could be added that most of these projects were carried out by the Authority's Engineering Division which had to make a profit over and above the cost of materials calculated on this basis, and that the freight and lighterage on all imported materials including cement was paid to the Authority's Marine Division which also had to make a profit. In 1976 a Commission of Inquiry recommended a staged dismantling of the Authority, the return of some functions to Government, the transfer of others to a public utilities board, and others again to private enterprise, leaving the Authority to concentrate upon capital development rather than the provision of services.³³

The inadequacies of the Authority were a significant restraint on development but there were other problems as well. Over the late 1960s and early 1970s permanent and pensionable colonial officials from the Western Pacific service were increasingly replaced by contract officers, many of whom remained only for a two-year term. Thus there was a constant turnover of expatriate personnel many of whom had neither tropical nor colonial experience and came more in pursuit of sunshine and high salaries than from a commitment to service. At the other extreme there were those who were, in a sense, refugees from places upon which the imperial sun had already set and, having been pensioned, were looking for continued colonial employment on a contract basis. A number of this latter group spent their time comparing the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, by which they meant South Tarawa, unfavourably with past imperial glories or

trials elsewhere. Thus the uncertainty of government policy was compounded by rapid staff changes, the attempt to fit the islands and their people into some alien mould, and a continuing lack of inter-departmental co-operation and planning that was caused as much by personal and national differences and prejudices as by the inadequacies of the bureaucratic system itself. Despite the creation of a planning office, development was often allowed to proceed on a project by project basis with insufficient overall co-ordination. For example a construction and roading programme was approved for Tarawa when the Government had only one small rock-crusher to produce the coral aggregate required for concrete. The programme was thus doomed to delays while a belated attempt was made to obtain another crusher under an aid grant, a procedure which invariably took longer than a direct purchase. Aid grants were substantial but they were not without strings; for example, a British grant for vehicle replacement went only half as far as it might have done because of the attached condition that the Government should buy Land Rovers from the United Kingdom rather than their Toyota equivalents from Japan.

Development expenditure rose rapidly over the period—from less than \$500 000 in 1967, to \$1.5 million in 1970, and to \$2.7 million in 1976. Despite the new definition of 'development' in the post-Mooring years, and the new concern with projects that would generate an economic return, there was in fact little to show for the change beyond the continued improvement and replanting of coconut groves—a project with long term rather than immediate benefits—and some success with bait-fish cultivation. Rather, there had been an accelerated growth of infrastructure without any commensurate growth in production, and an expansion of social services particularly on South Tarawa. In 1976, of the \$2.7 million development budget only \$200 000 was allocated to production while infrastructure absorbed \$1.5 million, administration \$700 000, and social services \$300 000.³⁴ In short, the Colony was, as it had been in the 1950s, faced with the harsh realities of coping with a modern world from the circumscribed resource base of an atoll environment; the difference lay in the extent of the palliatives provided with aid funds and the magnitude of the future burden of recurrent costs.

In the years between 1950 and 1976 the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony became both the beneficiary and the victim of changing British attitudes towards colonial dependencies. In the 1950s the idea of self-government based on a solid foundation of social and economic development gave way to emphasis on political development as a first priority with the development of natural resources to give economic independence as a complement to constitutional independence. The overriding concern was to build closer links between the United Kingdom and Europe while shedding remote financial and political responsibilities. While it is possible to foresee

economic viability for some dependencies, for most the achievement of that independence retreats constantly into the future as the minimum level of services and quality of life, as they are perceived by those who give or seek foreign aid, are constantly raised to meet new aspirations. For those countries without the resources to meet even the recurrent costs of that development and those minimum international standards, there is only the prospect of increased dependence. In the Gilbert and Ellice Islands the reality of development between 1950 and 1976 was 'more of the same' with constantly increasing expenditure on health, education, administration and communications and an ever-increasing centralisation of population and government expenditure on South Tarawa. There was little progress towards finding a replacement for phosphate income in the 1980s and beyond. Nor, for the vast majority of Islanders, was the problem perceived as having any great urgency. Prophecies of gloom on a future without phosphates made very little impact because most individuals could not relate their own situation to a national economy, they could not see any prospect of future poverty when on Tarawa and even on the outer islands the Government was spending increasing amounts on schools, clinics, and other government buildings. A future drop in remittance income from Ocean Island was accepted with resignation but in the knowledge that remittances from merchant marine trainees was on the increase. Although one-quarter of the population lived on Tarawa by the 1970s the three-quarters who lived on the outer islands tended to see central government as a thing apart, a source of laws and funds, but having little relevance to life on the outer islands where land taxes, local school fees, the copra price, the church and the Island Council were all considered much more central to reality.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Local government: policy and practice, 1948-1976

The realities of local government changed rather less in post-war years than policy revisions and legislative changes would suggest. In all major revisions of local government, the over-riding aims were to make the authoritarian Native Governments increasingly representative and less subject to direction by the central government, and to persuade the old men, the traditional leaders of Gilbertese village communities, to accept public office in reformed island councils. The *unimane*, however, opted for personal influence ahead of government-backed authority and refused to be wooed by the blandishments of District Officers. It was also the case that these policy revisions were less concerned with those islands still under chiefly dominance than with the gerontocracies of the southern Gilberts and of those islands in the north and centre of the group where chiefly power had waned. Moreover, these policies, formulated essentially in and for the Gilbert Islands, were generally applied arbitrarily to the Ellice group as well. Throughout the period on almost all islands of both groups there were institutions and organisations founded either on tradition or the church, or both, which could match or exceed the power of the official governments. In general, however, local compromises allowed both to operate side by side and only rarely did conflict come to the attention of the Government.

The 1941 Native Governments Ordinance was drafted as part of a wider move to dismantle the authoritarian structure created by Campbell and perpetuated by Grimble. But because of the outbreak of war, and the withdrawal of European staff in anticipation of Japanese occupation, the Ordinance was not introduced. Then, during the latter stages of the war, the Mitchell-Maude proposals which emphasised decentralisation were accepted, and Maude argued that this acceptance implied that the Ordinance should be amended before its introduction.¹ But the post-war situation demanded a strong central government and the situation was further complicated by continued occupation, by reconstruction and by a shortage of transport. As a consequence it took time to re-establish the Native Governments after an interregnum of four years and there was a distinct reluctance to tackle anything as radical as implied in the Mitchell-Maude proposals. Even by 1948 it was becoming clear that the ideals espoused by Mitchell and Maude could not be met, partly because of the restraints imposed by the Colony's particular

circumstances and partly because British policy now strongly emphasised the transference of responsibilities to central rather than to local governments. Thus the 1941 Native Governments Ordinance was finally implemented in its original form in 1948. The Ordinance was a compromise between the fact that Native Governments were dominated by their Magistrates, and the desire to entice the old men into the reconstituted councils by making one-third of the places on them open to election by adults over thirty years of age. The latter provision was a further compromise between 'democracy' and the Gilbertese insistence on a person being of mature years before participating in decision-making.² In practice, however, the Native Magistrate was too firmly entrenched, and too many of his powers were preserved, for the new governments to be regarded at all differently from the old. Two-thirds of the Councillors were still Government-appointed Kaubure who were little more than wardens responsible to the Magistrate for the cleanliness of their villages and the supervision of communal works. The Native Magistrate was to preside over the Island Court, where he was to be assisted by a jury of Kaubure, as well over the Island Council. The continued dominance of the Magistrate over both, however, made any separation of powers apparent rather than real.³

Each island was also to have a Lands Court designed to carry on the work of the Lands Commission. This was also to be headed by the Magistrate but here his power was circumscribed by a number of Kaubure and, more importantly, by the local members of the Lands Commission. Because land was life, a status symbol as well as a scarce resource, the formation of the Lands Commission *had* persuaded the old men to become involved, because they regarded themselves as the rightful custodians of the accumulated wisdom of their forebears in all matters concerning land. And their influence in this regard was magnified by the fact that the Kaubure with whom they served were not, for the most part, old men, and consequently earned community censure if they dared show anything but deference. Although dominant elsewhere, here the Magistrate's role was that of a chairman seldom able to dominate or overrule the Court.

Here, then, the attempt to recruit older men succeeded, but only because the priorities of the Government and the Islanders happened to coincide. Together with their control over land, the old men extended their influence over economic affairs by enthusiastically entering into the management of the co-operative societies which controlled copra collection as well as retail shopkeeping. Although the societies, registered and supervised by Government, were regarded as quasi-official agencies, centralised control was limited. For their part, the old men were simply continuing a tradition, dating back a century or more, of trying to control the terms of trade through community pressure. Thus the traditional leaders, in so far as they could be identified, found sufficient recognition of their status and channels for their influence through the Lands Courts and co-operative

societies as well as their *maneaba* councils. They could afford to remain aloof from local government.

There were other reasons for a general lack of enthusiasm for the new governments. On the islands that had seen American occupation, and among the men who had served in the labour corps, there was a generalised discontent with the reimposition of colonial authority, often petty in its application, represented by the post-war island governments. The materialism fostered by American occupation was fuelled by good seasons and high copra prices and thus low-paid employment became even less attractive than usual. Most of those prepared to serve the governments did so because they had relatively small land holdings and found the salaries—ranging from \$16 for a village policeman up to \$90 for the Magistrate of a large island—a useful supplement to copra income.

In the Ellice Islands, where the strong communal tradition had survived successive modifications in response to both mission and government pressures, the new Ordinance made very little impact. The overlapping membership of Island Councils, Lands Courts, and co-operative committees, the presence of church deacons on each, and the influence of the pastors over all, was sufficient to ensure the preservation of a common purpose. In the northern and central Gilberts, and particularly on Butaritari and Abemama and their satellite islands, the issue was similarly resolved by chiefs who secured the election or selection of their nominees where possible, and led a rival power structure which subverted the island government and ensured its eventual dismissal for incompetency where they could not.

The existence of both exceptions was recognised by officials but it was the failure of the legislation to achieve its objectives on the other islands—those dominated by informal councils of old men—that led to plans for its revision almost as soon as it had been introduced. This step was taken even though some of the officials involved conceded that part of the explanation for the failure of the new scheme had less to do with the legislation itself than with the manner of its introduction. There were, in the 1940s, few expatriate officials who could speak the vernacular languages and those who tried to explain the powers and responsibilities of the Councils were therefore dependent upon interpreters whose English might not be adequate for the task. Nor had there been any community education, of the type proposed by Maude, to spread public awareness of the role that local governments *could* play in island life, and there was no real attempt to educate officials of the Native Governments as to their duties and the relationships that should exist between central and local governments.

The main effect of the new proposals put forward by senior officials, all Europeans, would have been to restrict the Magistrates' powers to judicial matters and to restore the Chiefs of Kaubure to the headship of the legislative and executive branches of island government—the position they had been given by Swayne in 1893.⁴ The Island Councils were to be given elected majorities, increased

financial responsibilities, and their membership was to be widened to include Colony officials—teachers and wireless operators, for example—posted to outer islands.

At this point in the discussions Bernacchi, the new Resident Commissioner, arrived and promptly switched the direction of local government policy. Before being posted to the Colony from Malaya, Bernacchi had been involved in the drafting of a Village Councils Ordinance which was an attempt 'to force responsible and democratic local Government on a rural population which had no previous experience of running its own affairs'. The Malayan Ordinance had been designed to give the District Officer as many or as few powers as might be considered necessary in the particular circumstances of each village. 'This ordinance', wrote Bernacchi, 'is my own particular baby and it is my desire to modify and apply it to the islands of this Colony as quickly as possible...'⁵ Beyond the incorporation of discretionary powers for the appointment of additional councillors by the Resident Commissioner, however, the Malayan Ordinance ultimately made little impact because the High Commissioner was at first more in sympathy with the proposals already drafted. It was agreed that the Native Governments Ordinance should be repealed in stages and replaced by an Island Councils Ordinance, a Native Courts Ordinance, and a Native Lands Ordinance.⁶

Two months later a draft had been prepared but it was nearly a year before the issue was again raised in discussions with the High Commissioner, Sir Robert Stanley. Once again, and this time at Stanley's insistence, there was a mid-stream reversal of policy. Convinced that the Islanders would neither understand nor accept the changes, especially in so far as a separation of the Magistrate's powers was concerned, it was agreed that:

The Magistrate should be retained in both his judicial and executive capacities as Head of the Island Government and chairman of the Council, and that he should be regarded as the agent for the Central Government.⁷

Thus the office of the Magistrate was retained, together with that of the Chief of Kaubure, but the former Kaubure were replaced by Councillors elected for a three-year term and, in a further attempt to secure the participation of the 'true leaders of the people', their numbers were to be supplemented by a smaller number of councillors appointed by the Resident Commissioner. Assessors in the Native Courts were also to be appointed by the Resident Commissioner in consultation with the Councils.⁸ Under a subsequent ordinance, each Council was also given power to administer an island fund under the supervision of the District Officer. These funds were similar to those that had been established by Swayne but then abolished in 1917. At the same time the Councils were given increased responsibilities for health and education services and salaries, for the raising of local revenue through licence fees and taxation, and for the spending of government

subventions should these be given.⁹

It is significant that these changes were introduced on a piecemeal basis and were designed to remedy the problems of local government as these were perceived by European officials, some of whom had no experience of district administration in the Colony but assumed that the lessons learned in other tropical dependencies could be applied to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. Thus the arrangements for council membership owed something to the Malayan Ordinance, and the legislation relating to financial powers was first drafted to meet the specific conditions of the Solomon Islands.¹⁰ Moreover, there was no serious attempt to canvas Islanders' opinions and no representative assembly that could scrutinise the Government's proposals or put forward its own.

Only one attempt was made to invite reactions to the proposals from those likely to be affected by them. In 1951 a conference of Magistrates from the Gilbert Islands was held, largely as a training course but also in the hope that it might, in time, grow into the Council of Representatives proposed by Maude in 1945. Magistrates' Conferences were then held annually in the early 1950s with the membership gradually widening to include Gilbertese-speaking Magistrates from the Ellice Islands. The 1952 conference (attended only by Gilbertese Magistrates) was asked to comment on the working of the 1941 Ordinance, and the changes proposed by the District Commissioner and his colleagues. Some of the Magistrates were attracted to the idea of shedding a few responsibilities but most were opposed to any change that would diminish their powers or impinge in any way upon their status as head of their island's government and judiciary. Indeed, the main complaint of the 1941 Ordinance put forward by the Magistrates arose from the partial dismantling of the former authoritarian structure and the introduction of elections. While conceding that the old men *should* match their influence with formal service and responsibilities, the Magistrates argued that this could not be achieved through an electoral process. And they were also convinced that any who showed signs of diligence in carrying out the instructions of the District Officer or Magistrate would not be elected and that, as under the 1941 Ordinance, those who were successful would be motivated by a wish to be exempted from communal works.¹¹ Clearly, as had been the case since the days of Campbell and Murdoch, the *unimane* were prepared to acknowledge that the Magistrate had considerable power, but they also perceived that it could be unpopular power that could bring a loss of respect in traditional terms. Aware of the impossibility of pleasing both Government and people under such conditions, the *unimane* chose to grumble about the Government, and to undermine its more extreme demands, while asserting customary values through their informal *maneaba* councils and in their arbitration in land disputes. Not even the provision for appointment could remedy the situation because Bernacchi's centralist policies, combined with a shortage of shipping,

forced District Officers to live not in their Districts but at Tarawa. Thus whistle-stop touring, often planned according to the priorities of cargo movement, became the fashion, and District Officers saw the islands under their charge only briefly and infrequently—perhaps for a day, two or three times a year. Thus when it came to making appointments they were at the mercy of their local advisers—the Magistrates and Councillors—and it was usually a foregone conclusion that the names agreed upon at community meetings would go forward for confirmation.

Thus the Magistrates and the Chiefs of Kaubure, both Government appointees, continued to dominate the Island Councils. From the Government's point of view the Island Courts, too, were less satisfactory than before. While long-serving Magistrates might develop an understanding of the British concept of impartial law, and experienced jury-panels of Kaubure had at least come to recognise, if not always to apply, the principle of equality before the law, there was no way that assessors, chosen from the community at large, could be persuaded to put aside such considerations as the relative age, wealth or status of the offender and his victim, the way in which the church or its officers had been affected, or the seriousness of the offence in terms of custom.¹²

The hope that the revised financial arrangements would act as a stimulus to development on the outer islands, and persuade the island governments to participate more positively in island affairs, was never fulfilled. In practice the Ordinance, which had been intended to increase the financial responsibilities of the Councils, had the opposite effect. As well as meeting the costs of local salaries, and the salaries of local government officials, the Councils now had an additional responsibility for the salaries of all teachers and medical staff based on outer islands. In 1958 only four of the islands in the Gilbert and Ellice groups could balance their budgets. The other twenty islands all received subventions which, in the case of some of the smaller islands, had to cover as much as two-thirds of all expenditure. Nor was there any real incentive for the Councils to improve their situation. On the one hand they were guaranteed government assistance to cover any shortfall and, on the other, they knew that half of any surplus would be taken to help offset subventions to less wealthy or less industrious Councils. On the basis of an analysis completed in 1962, the resumption by the Government of responsibility for the salaries of Colony officials posted to outer islands would have brought all but four islands within easy reach of a balanced budget. Instead of encouraging Council initiatives, the 1955 Ordinance discouraged them. The Government off-loaded to the Councils some \$24 500 of its salary burden but was still obliged to cover \$17 000 of this indirectly through subventions. Savings were thus about \$7500.¹³ The costs, however, were much greater, for the scheme reinforced the Islanders' belief that local government was responsive and responsible only to the centre and not to the locality. Such beliefs were also confirmed by

the close supervision over the financial affairs of the Councils exercised by District Officers with instructions to keep subventions to a minimum. As one District Officer reported:

...the meeting was nothing more than a "facade" as the council members have virtually no say in how their money should be spent. Having started the meeting with a talk stressing that it was their own money that they were spending and that they should remember their responsibility to the taxpayer we went on to discuss the salaries of the Local Government Officials, Teachers, Dressers etc. When they want to change these salaries I had to explain, to everyone's confusion, that although it was their money, in fact they could *not* spend it how they liked but according to "governments" wishes.¹⁴

By 1962 the Councils were in a sorry state.¹⁵ The Magistrate was firmly established in his paramount position and tended to become even more the master rather than the servant of his Council. The calibre of Councillors was low, and the public attitude towards local government was apathetic in the absence of any incentive to make it otherwise. With the Colony Government prepared to balance the budget, and ready to take half of any surplus, the Councils saw little point in making themselves unpopular through increasing taxes. The Island Councils had become ineffective and moribund.

Proposals for yet another revision of the local government structure were discussed at the 1962 Colony Conference—an assembly of appointed members which had evolved from the Magistrates' Conference.¹⁶ European administrators still favoured the creation of Island Councils with elected majorities, a true separation of Island Courts from Island Councils, and the establishment of a unified civil service for central and local government. Island Executive Officers were to be selected, trained and appointed by the Colony Government and would act as clerks to Councils, Courts and Lands Courts. They would also perform some duties as agents of the Colony Government. Responsibility for the salaries of most teachers, post office officials, police and medical staff would return to the Government, leaving local authorities to provide and maintain buildings for both central and local government services.

By the Island Courts Ordinance of 1965, the separation of judicial and executive functions in local government was finally achieved. Island Courts were to be composed of three members appointed by the Resident Commissioner. They were to have limited jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases and were to be subordinate to Colony Magistrates' Courts. The maximum sentence they could impose was six months' imprisonment and/or a fine of \$100. They were empowered to decide cases under both Colony law and the by-laws passed by Island Councils. Colony Magistrates, now professional lawyers rather than touring District Officers, were to review all decisions of Island Courts and to hear all serious charges.

By the time the Local Government Ordinance was enacted in 1966

many of the 1962 proposals had been modified or abandoned because of objections from the High Commissioner and the Colonial Office. Most of the criticisms raised against the recommendations prepared by officials in the Colony revealed little appreciation of the peculiar problems to be faced. Despite arguments that the Colony's local government structure and service should not necessarily be based on those of other territories, the High Commissioner insisted that the new legislation should be closely modelled on that introduced in the Solomons in 1963 and drafted to meet conditions in that territory.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the functions of the Councils established under the Ordinance were much wider than those granted to any predecessor. In addition to the usual duties of preserving order, maintaining good government, and keeping records, the Councils were expected to play a far greater role in providing services for their communities. All members of the new Councils were to be elected for a three-year term, with one-third retiring annually by rotation. Each Council was to elect a President from among its members. The age of eligibility for Council membership and for the franchise was lowered from 30 to 21 years. The main sources of revenue for the Councils were to be a basic personal rate and a land tax and, until the scheme was abandoned in 1970, a rebate of copra export duty fixed according to production. For buildings and for development projects, the Government was to provide grants or loans depending on the nature of the venture and the availability of funds. The proposal to establish a unified civil service was dropped at the insistence of the High Commissioner who also stipulated that Island Executive Officers' salaries should not be fixed against those of their peers employed in the Colony service, and transfers between the local and central services were not to be permitted. Graduates from the first local government training course were posted to the new Councils from December 1966.

The new legislation, effective from 1967, marked a new phase in the development of local government. Previously the Native Governments had been largely concerned with petty administrative tasks, and with the imposition of negative controls. The 1966 Ordinance attempted to introduce a democratic system of control as an incentive for community development. It was hoped that the expansion of democratic procedures at the village level would complement constitutional development at the national level and lead to a gradual, but inevitable, transference of responsibility to a Westminster-type parliament.

From the outset the chances of success were limited as the new system was never satisfactorily explained outside of Tarawa. Broadcasting and written propaganda were relied upon to a large extent but neither media had ever proved successful in the Colony. Shipping and staffing problems limited the time that District Officers could spend on the islands explaining the legislation and most officials were handicapped by an inability to speak the vernacular languages. Further, the need for change was not appreciated by those who were to

serve on, and be ruled by, the new Councils. To most people on the outer islands the changes were being made at the whim of the Government or, more specifically, its European administrators. Many community leaders regretted the passing of the authoritarian powers of the Magistrate, which they had come to regard as complementary to their own influence and a necessary force to ensure village and island harmony. Councils and Presidents were elected but were given virtually no training. In the absence of extensive touring to compensate for these problems—District Officers still spent most of their time on Tarawa—the Island Executive Officers were left, by default on many islands, as the only men with any understanding of the situation and the training to meet its demands.

Despite the large number of applications for the first local government training course the calibre of candidates, especially in written and spoken English, was not particularly high. Given the difficulty and variety of work involved, the low salaries offered, and the necessity of living on an outer island, local government service could only be second best to the central civil service. The duties of the Island Executive Officers included the collection and control of all island funds and some Colony funds, the supervision of building projects, the purchase of stores, the supervision of paid labourers and day prisoners, the supervision and control of subordinate staff, the responsibility for keeping lands registers, the payment of salaries and administration of the provident fund for local government employees, correspondence between Councils and the Government, the annual organisation of elections and the preparation and execution of by-laws. They also served as clerks to the Lands Courts, Island Courts and Island Councils.¹⁸ For this, the average Island Executive Officer was paid between \$500 and \$600 a year at a time when his equivalent in central government received a starting salary in excess of \$900.¹⁹ The argument upon which the distinction was based—that living on outer islands was cheaper than living on Tarawa—was discriminatory, in that no similar distinction was made for teachers or medical officers. It also ignored the fact that Island Executive Officers were usually not landowners on the islands where they worked and were therefore as dependent upon imported food as their counterparts on Tarawa. Discontent with conditions, and an inability to handle the work or the pressure caused a high turnover of staff in the early years of the scheme. This discontent, together with the low salaries, and a lack of close supervision, were put forward as explanations for the high incidence of local government officials charged with the theft of government funds.

The new Councils faced a number of teething problems.²⁰ For example, the relative powers and responsibilities of Island Executive Officers and the Presidents of the Councils were neither explained nor understood. Both, in a sense, aspired to the mantle of power left vacant by the departure of the former Native Magistrates. The annual retirement of one-third of the Councillors, and the annual election of

a President made for a lack of continuity especially as many Islanders believed that leadership should be shared, lest a long-term incumbent should begin to see himself as being better than his fellows. Some Councillors saw themselves as successors to the Kaubure or village police, and acted accordingly. The placement of one or two Colony policemen on each outer island over this period was supposed to obviate the need for local law enforcement officials but there remained a vacuum in the structure of island government—there was no one to supervise communal works, settle minor breaches of the peace, or to inspect villages for cleanliness. Finally, Councils were allowed to appoint village wardens whom they promptly called Kaubure.

In particular, the wardens were given responsibility for the supervision of communal works which generally involved the maintenance of roads and local government buildings. Some projects tackled under the scheme—for example the repair of a village *maneaba*—seldom attracted any opposition because they were regarded as customary obligations; other tasks were less popular. Under post-war regulations most adults between sixteen and sixty not in wage employment were obliged to work up to twenty-four days each year on community projects. Although the levy had been reduced from the fifty-two days a year imposed before the war, and the scheme ensured cheap labour and materials for the maintenance of buildings, it was not popular and, mindful of the International Labour Organisation's strictures on forced labour, the Government decided to increase local taxes to pay for materials and, depending on the nature of the project, to use either paid or voluntary labour.

This new scheme immediately created friction between Councils and communities. Given the levels of taxation that could be sustained in what were still essentially subsistence economies, the funds available to most Councils were soon absorbed by the costs of materials and freight and thus they were forced to resort to voluntary labour. As might have been expected, causeway building, road repairs, prison maintenance and even classroom building were regarded as being 'for the Government' and many chose not to offer their services. Some Councils, faced with local resistance to increased taxes and pressure from District Officers to complete their works programmes, tried to coerce their electors into taking part. The stalemate that followed was resolved when a diligent search through the ILO's conventions revealed a convenient escape clause which permitted compulsory labour for 'minor communal services'. By 1969 most Councils had been persuaded to adopt a minor communal services by-law drafted by the Government.²¹

A major source of funds for the new Councils was a basic personal rate initially set at an average of \$2.50 for men in the Gilberts, \$2 for men in the Ellice Islands, and slightly less for women in both groups.²² There was also a continuation of the land tax set according to Council preference either as a flat rate per land, or on a sliding scale according

to the size and quality of each plot. The copra rebate scheme, introduced as a means of subsidising Councils while encouraging copra production, achieved neither. Rebate-incentives went to Councils, not to producers, the subsidies given depended more on rainfall than on need, and the scheme was soon abandoned.²³ Locally raised revenue per island ranged from less than \$2000 a year on the Ellice and smaller Gilbert Islands, to more than \$7000 on more populous islands like Abaiang and Tabiteuea.²⁴ In addition Councils could apply for grants and loans to help meet the cost of capital improvements. Initially the Councils were reluctant to commit themselves to large projects but increased touring in the late 1960s and early 1970s by District Officers who explained the scheme, an improvement in the supply of materials, and the realisation that government funds could be made to flow to as well as from outer islands, all led to more ambitious planning. Thus an impressive number of classrooms, clinics, local government offices and court houses were completed, and buses were bought by some Councils. Many of these projects were helped, sometimes hindered, by an influx of youthful volunteers from Britain and New Zealand.

Gradually, a new enthusiasm for development evolved on the outer islands but some Councils and community leaders were caught between their desires and their means and resorted to fund-raising methods that revived customary obligations and practices. Thus the informal councils of old men, which, on many islands, had formalised their position to the extent of collecting and saving levies in private island funds, began to reassert their power. For example, when the Onotoa Island Council experienced a shortfall in revenue in 1968, it sought assistance from the old men of the island. The latter decided that \$1100 ear-marked for school development should be given to the Island Council and that the remaining deficit should be covered by a special levy of \$2.41 per taxpayer. This amount, paid without demur, amounted to a doubling of the basic rate.²⁵ On Tamana and Arorae, and on all the Ellice Islands, special funds for community and church purposes had long been in existence and were sometimes the source of grants or loans to impecunious Island Councils. These funds were maintained by levies fixed at village meetings, on both resident families and on individuals working at Ocean Island, Nauru or Tarawa—the latter group, especially those in the phosphate industry, might well be asked for as much as one month's salary each year in addition to any remittances to their families.

Such a solidarity of purpose could not always be maintained in the Gilbert Islands, however, and most commonly it was threatened by sectarian rivalries. In 1967, for example, the Maiana Island Council ran short of funds whereupon the *unimane* decided that each family should make a \$10 donation to the Council on the understanding that there would be no 'voluntary' labour on the island in 1968. All but three paid. A deficit still remained and a supplementary levy of \$1 was announced. At this point the three original defaulters were joined by

sixteen others, all Roman Catholics, who refused to pay on the advice of a mission teacher. The *unimane*, faced with this rebellion of a small minority of the 750 Catholics on the island, forbade any contact or conversation with the defaulters or their families. Four who broke the ban were arrested. Tempers ran high and the island erupted into violence with massed attacks on the property of those who had stood against the decree of the *unimane*. In a manner reminiscent of the treatment meted out to the vanquished in days gone by, *babai* pits were slashed, trees destroyed, houses burnt and canoes smashed. As a result of the violence, which died as quickly as it had flared, more than 200 people from a population of 1700 were charged with a range of offences; all pleaded guilty, and were fined a token \$1 apiece and ordered to make restitution.²⁶

In the examples discussed thus far, the recourse of the Council to the community was sporadic and usually for a specific purpose. For the Ellice Islands, however, the relationship among community councils, Island Councils, and church committees produced a continuing overlapping of functions and responsibilities that took the actual role of the Island Councils well away from that provided for by the Ordinance. With so many pressures to consensus, and no prospect of sectarian disagreement, there was little chance of a divergence of purpose among the various bodies. At Beru, on the other hand, the *unimane* became so discontented with their island government that they forced all Councillors to resign.

At Nonouti, the *unimane* not only had power at least as great as this, but formalised their position in an association that controlled almost all facets of island life.²⁷ In pre-colonial days Nonouti had been divided into nine *maneaba* districts with the leaders of each district occasionally coming together as an informal island council. Over the 20th century this coming together had occurred less frequently until it was usually associated only with the arrival of a distinguished guest, or an occasion of great social significance like the opening of a rebuilt *maneaba*. In 1967, when the new local government legislation was introduced, the island had a population of about 2400 of whom 1000 were Roman Catholic and 1300 were Protestant.

The re-emergence of *unimane* power on an island-wide basis began in 1964 as Nonouti prepared to host the 75th jubilee celebrations of the Sacred Heart Mission in the Gilberts. Protestants and Catholics worked together to house and entertain several hundred visitors and, during the celebrations, the *unimane* agreed that an association should be formed to encourage co-operation between the two churches. This display of ecumenism partly reflected insular pride which demanded that the island, having been chosen to host the jubilee, should do all possible to justify the honour. More important, however, was the role of Father Grandgeorge who was then stationed at Nonouti and had played a major part in organising the celebrations. His refusal to take the sectarian stand adopted by some

of his colleagues and his active encouragement of ecumenical ventures were key factors in the founding of *Te Reitaki n Nonouti* (the Union of Nonouti People), in 1965. It was agreed that there should be an annual gathering of all Nonouti people on the anniversary of the jubilee celebrations and that between these meetings a committee of village representatives was to control *Reitaki* funds and activities. Membership was confined to male heads of families: a man paid one subscription for himself and his sons, whatever their ages and marital status, but on his death each son of voting age was required to contribute.

Perhaps the strongest traditional element in the *Reitaki* rules was the insistence that all Nonouti people should abide by *Reitaki* decisions. Any Islander who refused to join the *Reitaki* or to attend its meetings was 'to be deprived of his rights as a Nonouti man'. In effect this meant that recalcitrants would be sent to Coventry with all other Islanders being forbidden to have any contact with them under threat of receiving the same treatment. Moreover, the offender (together with his family) would be excluded from the co-operative society and thus denied a market for his copra and the opportunity to buy consumer goods; neither he nor his sons would be chosen to work in the phosphate industry at Nauru or Ocean Island, and he would be fined \$6. For more than two years from its inaugural meeting in September 1965, the *Reitaki* met with little opposition. It enjoyed the support of mission leaders and its authority remained unchallenged by the Native Government. As a result, the rules were seldom invoked and fines, when imposed, were duly paid — an acknowledgment of the pressure the *unimane* could bring to bear. By January 1967 the *Reitaki* fund held more than \$1200. Most of this amount had been derived from membership levies (367 at \$1 in 1965; 378 at \$2 in 1966) and fines, the latter amounting to \$66.

To this point the *Reitaki* had spent none of its funds and retained its existence separate from the Native Government, most of whose members were appointed by the Colony Government. With the introduction of the 1966 Local Government Ordinance, however, the role of the *Reitaki* changed significantly. Within a few months the *Reitaki* had become the governing authority on Nonouti with the Island Council as its executive arm. In a manner not envisaged by the Colony Government, the *unimane* of Nonouti had decided to re-enter the field of local government.

At the 1967 annual gathering it was decided that *Reitaki* funds should be combined with those of the Island Council. In practice this meant that a Savings Bank account was opened in the name of the Nonouti Island Council but with the three trustees being chosen by, and responsible to, the *Reitaki*. The Island Council was left to handle day to day tasks of island government but all major decisions — for example, the enactment of by-laws and the fixing of tax rates — were referred for *Reitaki* approval. The *Reitaki* also became the island's development authority although all projects were performed in the

Council's name, a concession demanded by the system. Islanders working away from Nonouti were also asked for support. Shortly after the establishment of the Island Council the *Reitaki* sought funds from Nonouti associations on Tarawa, Nauru and Ocean Island. In 1967 nearly \$2500 was collected in this way and a further \$1800 was received in 1968.

In 1967 Nonouti acquired a bus costing \$4900. Of the initial payment of \$3500, the Council provided \$1500 and the *Reitaki* \$2000 and in the following year the *Reitaki* gave the \$1400 required to clear the debt. Further, its committee organised village labour groups to build stone causeways across tidal reef passages so that the bus might run to all except the most remote villages. At the end of 1968 the *Reitaki* was still left with a balance approaching \$3000, excluding grants and loans; Council income for 1968 was about \$6500, of which some \$2000 was received from the land tax and similar sums from personal rates and bus fares.

In June 1968 the President of the Island Council approached the *Reitaki* with a request for \$3000 to meet the cost of a new clinic. The *Reitaki* committee agreed but the District Officer suggested to the Council that its budget was more likely to be approved if a local government office requiring a similar financial commitment was built first. The *Reitaki* held to its view that a clinic should have priority and declined to produce the \$3000 that had been included in the Estimates under 'gifts'. The Island Council was now in an extremely difficult position. With pressure coming from both sides, it agreed to delay the construction of the clinic. For its part, the *Reitaki* accepted this as inevitable, but still refused to support the alternative project and forced the Council to finance the offices from existing resources by refusing to allow any increase in taxation.

At this time the Colony Government knew little of the *Reitaki*. With a District Officer visiting the island only occasionally — sometimes for a few hours, seldom for more than two or three days — the Government's ignorance is hardly surprising. To outsiders it seemed that the people of Nonouti were co-operating to develop their island — all very laudable, and publicly encouraged by officials from the Resident Commissioner downwards with the result that the status of the *Reitaki* was consolidated and any potential opposition was stifled. Indeed, it was largely because of this surge of progress stimulated from within, and also because of the flourishing Nonouti associations on Tarawa, Nauru and Ocean Island, that Nonouti was chosen as a pilot for testing the concept of island development plans. The main feature of the plan was the establishment of agricultural co-operatives so that fragmented land plots might be systematically exploited. Thus the Government further boosted the development taking place on the island, and unwittingly strengthened the position of the *Reitaki*, without really understanding the forces that helped to make the scheme a success. There was little recognition of the power of the

Reitaki and, in its face, the consequent weakness of the Island Council.

Then, in the latter part of 1968, cracks began to appear in *Reitaki* solidarity. Father Grandgeorge's successor began to preach against the *Reitaki*, urging Roman Catholics to withdraw. This, for the most part, they declined to do and 379 members (only three less than in 1967) attended the annual gathering in September. But it was at this meeting that sharp divisions first emerged within the *Reitaki*. In preparing its original Estimates for 1969 the Island Council, with the approval of the *Reitaki*, had agreed to make a grant towards a new classroom for one of the Catholic schools. A Protestant pastor had objected, and the District Officer ruled that the school did not qualify for assistance. Now the *Reitaki*, the Island Council and the Island Executive Officer were lumped together by the priest as part of a Protestant conspiracy aiming to deprive the Catholics of what was legitimately theirs.

The next six months saw a substantial erosion of *Reitaki* membership. The *Reitaki* committee met with Protestant and Catholic leaders, and a deputation visited every village *maneaba* in an attempt to bring about a reconciliation. But the resurgence of religious separatism for which the school issue was an occasion at least as much as a cause, continued apace. One hundred members, all Catholics, had withdrawn by March 1969 but a similar number chose to ignore the directives of their priest who threatened to withhold the sacraments from *Reitaki* members.

By April 1969 defections had reached such numbers that the committee took steps to buttress the position of the *Reitaki*. It decided that only its members would be eligible for public office or employment on the island; non-members serving on the Lands Court, the co-operative society committee and the committee of the agricultural co-operative or employed by these bodies or the Island Council were to be dismissed. The eight who were told to leave their positions did so in the belief that the *Reitaki* was acting within its rights. At this time, from a visiting Gilbertese official who happened to witness the dismissals, the Government learned of the nature and full extent of *Reitaki* power. The District Commissioner visited the island, with a police contingent, to investigate the dismissals. Despite the defections, and the Government's warning against any further reprisals, the *unimane* of the *Reitaki* were emphatic that it was their duty as well as their intention to develop Nonouti for all its 'children'. But by the end of 1969 the *Reitaki's* power had been undermined by restrictions placed upon it by the Government, and by the united opposition of about 100 Roman Catholic families. Any charges of sectarianism, however, were considerably weakened by the continued membership of a similar number of Roman Catholic families and by the unanimous backing given to the *Reitaki* by members of the Island Council — half of whom were Catholic. The *Reitaki* remained an important force on the island but with time its power gradually

declined. Its strength had depended upon universal approbation. Once this was lost, the *Reitaki* began to fade.

Although the *Reitaki* was most remarkable for its reassertion of *unimane* power, the need to make some concessions to modernity was recognised. For example, the *Reitaki* adopted many of the outward forms of the Island Council whose powers it was assuming. It made 'laws', collected 'taxes', chose office-holders from among the district representatives who made up the committee, and diligently kept minutes and financial records. But despite this outer veneer of western forms, the essence of the *Reitaki* organisation, and the basis of its power, was traditional. The *Reitaki* could not have achieved such dominance without the consent of the Nonouti Islanders and there could be no basis for that consent without the survival of a belief that the *unimane* held and should exercise power within the community. In this context it is particularly significant that more than half the Catholic community chose to pay greater heed to their *Reitaki* obligations and to the temporal sanctions threatened by the *unimane*, than to the spiritual sanctions at the command of the priest.

The *Reitaki*, and other *unimane*-dominated island associations in the southern Gilberts, and church-dominated organisations in the Ellice Islands, were only some of the forms in which traditional leaders exercised power outside the formal structure of government. On those of the northern and central Gilbert Islands which had formerly been ruled by high chiefs, the aristocracies continued to work beside as well as within the island governments. For example, Tokatake, the high chief of Abemama, had gone to live in the Solomons but his son, Bauro, still exerted enormous influence. This was not simply because of his birth, nor because so large a proportion of the population depended upon his lands for their subsistence and prosperity, but because he chose, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to consolidate his power by serving on the Island Council and the committee of the co-operative society as well as being returned as the island's member of parliament.

And on Butaritari, where the Government had ceased to recognise a paramount chief from 1963, the chiefly élite continued to exert considerable influence on island life and to hold a number of important offices — partly to protect their own interests and partly from a sense of obligation. But the people of Butaritari still regarded the Island Council as an agency of the Government and there was as a consequence a tendency for those with some experience of the European world, or of government employment, to be elected to it. Beside the official structure there are also village councils, and an island-wide council of old men which was first formed to seek a redistribution of the former 'King's' lands, then assumed a wider role. While not in any way being able to match the influence of the *Reitaki* in its prime, this council did raise several hundred dollars by levying adults 50 cents each to help pay for the reconstruction of the island's rest house as a small hotel.²⁸

The assumption that Island Councils were 'for the Government', to be influenced if not controlled from the centre, thus persisted beyond the introduction of the 1966 Ordinance and encouraged the continuation of informal councils to consider matters regarded as beyond the competence of a formal government agency. But once the initial adjustments had been made, the new legislation won the Islanders' approval in so far as it separated Courts from Councils, and finally removed from the scene the authoritarian presence of the Native Magistrates. And while the Island Councils were still seen as government agencies they achieved a new usefulness as the funnels through which funds for island development might flow. Thus it was not so much the local government reorganisation as the simultaneous concern with 'development' that won a degree of acceptance for the Island Councils. As the Colony moved towards self-government in the 1970s, and development planning became a major government activity, there was a desire to raise rural incomes from increased copra production, from wage employment, the sale of handicrafts, and the sale of provisions to Tarawa. There was also a preoccupation with improving the quality of infrastructure and services on the outer islands partly, perhaps largely, to make rural living more attractive and thus to slow the drift of population to South Tarawa. At the same time there was a renewed emphasis on touring by District Officers, and other government officials, that new policies might be explained, and District Stations which served a number of government departments were developed at Butaritari, Abemama and Tabiteuea. These Stations, together with one already established at Funafuti, made good use of improved shipping and the internal air service to bring government services to rural areas. All these changes, together with the drafting and implementation of development plans for each island, allowed the Island Councils to show tangible benefits apparently accruing from their presence. The Councils still made by-laws and levied taxes, but many of the control functions of government were transferred to Colony police — usually strangers on the islands to which they were posted. Thus the Councils lost some of the negative image that had characterised the old Native Governments. But it was mainly the prospects for 'development' that encouraged the growth of a working compromise between elected and traditional leaders on most islands. While the central government was still perceived as an instrument for control, it was also perceived as a source of funds; and as the funds had to be channelled through the Island Councils, these won a new acceptance in the eyes of their electors. It was relevant also that elected politicians had an increasing voice in policy formation in the 1970s. In general, representatives from the outer islands were more concerned with removing irritants from the system than with major restructuring. With the local compromises and adaptations that had already been made, and the opportunity to express discontent at elections, the 1966 Ordinance had produced something approaching local government to replace the

'central government in the localities' that had previously been imposed.

The 1970s also saw the emergence of elected Councils on South Tarawa where previously the central Government had acted as overlord in occasional consultation with a nominated Town Council on Betio. In 1972 an elected council was established on Betio and another, the Te Inainano Urban Council, was created to cover the remainder of South Tarawa from Bairiki to Bonriki. Obviously, with so much of the urban area concerned with government activity, the role of these Councils is circumscribed, but they do serve as a cushion between the Government and the landowners of Tarawa and as an agency through which grievances can be presented to the Government.

This latter function, so crucial in the role of the Urban Councils, was much less important for the Councils on outer islands where the Government presence encroached much less on the lives and resources of the people. To some extent South Tarawa was another world where, in 1973, one-quarter of the Colony's population lived on a mere 8.5 square kilometres of land and, if they were strangers to Tarawa, depended on wages for their livelihood. Lifestyles on the outer islands were changing, but not as fast as those on South Tarawa. Ever-increasing numbers of Islanders decided that they wished to leave one lifestyle for the other, to seek the benefits and to accept the costs of moving to town. It meant change but not a rejection of culture — merely a continuation of adjustment, and of adaptation, that had been going on for centuries.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Modern lifestyles

Since the 1840s the lifestyles of Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders have been changing in response to new influences from beyond their formerly circumscribed world. The nature and pace of their cultural adaptation has varied depending upon the particular nature of their traditional societies, the intensity of their contact with outsiders, and the perceived profits and penalties associated with alternative courses of action. Thus the dangers and inadequacies of generalisation, or of any attempt to describe trends, are magnified by the differing responses that have been evoked by common influences, and by the inevitably uneven coverage provided by both written sources and field research. And turning points are not always easy to define. At the individual level some changes in lifestyle or in attitude may be marked by a conscious decision or a deliberate act — joining the church, for example, or moving to another island, or taking the pill — but social change is a more subtle process which may leave those affected by it unaware of the nature of that change or of its implications. The hazards of the undertaking should not prevent the attempt, however, for broad trends are discernible, some specific data are available, and the ideal — the analysis of the subtleties of response from all communities — is clearly beyond the realm of the formidable and into the impossible. Where it is appropriate the impressions gained during four periods of fieldwork between 1969 and 1977 have been supplemented by the recorded impressions of others and by statistical material which is, however, limited in quantity and sometimes of dubious reliability. The discussion that follows focusses on the mid-1970s, and attempts to examine lifestyles on the eve of the partition of the Colony.¹

In reviewing the 150 years that have passed since European visitors penetrated the isolation of this island world, continuity still seems more important than change; the prevailing impression is of island cultures that have adopted new ways not slavishly, but selectively, so as to preserve traditional values even if the form of their expression has been modified with time. It has also been important that the Gilbert and Ellice groups are remote, that their islands are scattered; that, with the exception of the phosphates at Ocean Island, there are few resources to attract foreigners; and that the plans of those who came offering their own particular paths to salvation or civilisation could be undermined or turned to a quite different effect than was intended by peoples with a genius for adapting outward forms while

retaining the substance of their own cultures.

The most potent pressures for change throughout the period of European contact have been the introduction of Christianity, of western forms of government, and the opportunity to participate in wage employment and a cash economy. These, together with western education — secular or religious, formal or informal — have led to a widespread modification of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Equally important as an agent of change has been the migration which has become a major feature of island life. In the 19th century Islanders worked on whaling ships; they were also carried to mines and plantations across and beyond the Pacific Ocean; in the 20th century they worked in the phosphate industry at Ocean Island and Nauru; and, since the Second World War, ever-increasing numbers have travelled even further afield — for education in Fiji or the United Kingdom, for example, or around the world as merchant seamen. Most of this migration has been relatively short term with the travellers eventually returning to their home islands bringing the ideas and technology of other cultures and accounts of alternative lifestyles; these latter, it might be noted, have as often served to convince the Islanders of the superiority of their own ways as they have led to any desire for emulation. Within the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, too, migration has become an important force for social change as the population of South Tarawa has been swelled by migrants from the outer islands. Even more significant in the long term, perhaps, were mission and government policies which persuaded, then compelled, the Islanders to move from their small kin-based settlements into centralised villages.

Village consolidation began in the 1870s with the desire of the LMS pastors in the Ellice and southern Gilbert Islands to remove their newly-won converts from the sinful pleasures and distractions of Paganism. In the Ellice group, the rapid acceptance of Christianity by whole communities meant that when the colonial government began to pursue a rigorous policy of centralising settlements in the late 1890s, it found that the essential work had already been done. The same applied to the small southern Gilbert Islands of Tamana and Arorae but further north, where there was no such unanimity of purpose, the situation was much more complex. From early in the 20th century the Government no longer permitted people to live in scattered *kainga* hamlets but restricted them to residence within prescribed village boundaries. Most of these new villages were based upon a single *maneaba* district but Campbell, Murdoch, and others of their generation had little compunction about amalgamating districts to facilitate administration and the enforcement of island regulations. The large extended families that had formerly been the units of residence generally managed to preserve their integrity for a time, and to deal with one another as they had done in the past, but gradually their cohesiveness was eroded as restrictions upon the number of buildings on each village site forced families to divide as they grew.

Where previously, especially for males, blood ties had been reinforced by the closeness of related households sharing a common site, the tendency in the colonial period was for individuals to develop a primary role in, and responsibility towards, the household in which they lived; a strong but flexible relationship with close kin elsewhere within the village; and, as before, a wide-ranging recognition of kin further removed in terms of blood or distance. But within the village, proximity of residence no longer implied kinship, the new villages could give only incidental recognition to the religious affiliations and preferences of their component households, and the relationship between landownership and residence that had been an essential feature of customary lifestyles was destroyed.

Such was the mode of government in the Campbell era that village areas were defined by administrative fiat, those who owned no land within the designated area were given house-sites on the lands of those who did and the latter, for the most part, received neither rents nor the compensation of equivalent land outside the village. And while land ownership had formerly been individualised, and passed on through both male and female lines, this had been modified in practice by residence within an extended family hamlet and the collective use of food pits and land by hamlet members, with those who remained within the hamlet having first claim upon its land. But with the gradual emergence of multiple households descended from a single pre-colonial hamlet, pressures grew for a division of lands that would give tangible recognition to *potential* rights unqualified by residence and, as a consequence, there was an accelerated fragmentation of holdings. Thus, with successive generations, the lands of any given individual became more widespread, and more difficult to exploit. For distant lands, those not easily worked from the owner's village, a relative or friend might be appointed caretaker, a status that more often gave the right to gather nuts and other produce than imposed the obligation to improve the land, and thus its productive capacity tended to diminish with time. Caretaking is still in vogue for remote lands, or those which a well-endowed family lacks the need or manpower to exploit, or those whose owners have migrated in pursuit of education or employment.

Land is still the basis of status and of 'real' wealth. While the immediate purchasing power of those with cash incomes is recognised, this bestows no real status upon them unless savings are translated into land, for cash is regarded as transitory wealth that does not guarantee long-term security or provide adequately for children; as an inheritance, cash is no substitute for even the meanest land. Families that have spent two generations in a wage-earning urban environment still identify very strongly with a 'home island', not so much because it is where their grandparents were born, or where most of their relatives live, but because it is where they themselves own or will inherit land to which they could return without being considered strangers. It is land which gives each individual his identity.

On the outer islands, at least, the land and the sea are still the basis of subsistence. True, drought can reduce the land to impotence, to the point where it can no longer provide even a marginal existence, but colonial rule and modern aid programmes have eliminated starvation in Oceania. Where cash is available, store foods can supplement the local diet. Although wage earners on Tarawa, Ocean Island and even the outer islands are forced into a heavy dependence upon imported food — tinned meat or fish, rice, tea, flour — most households eat such foods only occasionally. Imported food is eaten more frequently on islands like Butaritari and Abemama where cash incomes are high; yet even here it usually serves as a complement to, not a substitute for, local foods. Coconut products and fish are still the main items in outer island diet.

Work, for most Islanders, still means growing, gathering, catching or making the means of subsistence. In the 1970s the household was still a very flexible organism which might swell or shrink depending on migration, the labour demands of related households, the need to prepare a feast, or to cope with the consequences of birth, marriage, illness or death. In 1973, at the time of the census, some households had but a single member, others had a score or more, but the average size was between six and seven members in the Gilbert Islands north of the Equator and in the Ellice Islands, and nearer to five in the southern Gilberts. Nearly twice as many households stretched across three generations as across two — that is, a majority of extended family households over nuclear family households — and on the outer islands two further defining characteristics caused by migration were a slight preponderance of females over males, and an artificially depressed proportion of children and young adults.² But most households, either from their own resources, or through the generosity of relatives, could perform the essential tasks. Thus toddy cutting, usually the preserve of young men, might be left to an active fifty-year-old; or a female-dominated household without any men capable of lagoon or deep-sea fishing, or one lacking a canoe, might benefit from the surplus catch of related households and spend more time than others gathering small fish, octopus and shell-fish from the reef area; *babai* or *pulaka* cultivation was usually performed by older men, but could be left to younger men or to women.

The land resources available to each household vary in quantity and quality and accessibility. Most families have regular access to rather less than five hectares although the chiefly families of Abemama and Butaritari own very large tracts of land by atoll standards — a hundred acres in some cases. Most of this area is worked by caretakers because the commercial exploitation of lands on a large scale using wage-labourers or even share-croppers is not socially acceptable. The aim of each household is to be independent, to be on a par with its neighbours, and there is strong disapproval against any who profit from the efforts of others. Thus, on the outer islands, it is only institutions — the Government, the Island Council, the co-operative

society and, in some circumstances, the church — which are regarded as legitimate employers of labour. Thus it is difficult to grow rich in the village economy. The 'efficient' working of lands by well-organised kinsmen is tolerated so long as neither the efforts nor the profits are seen to reflect upon neighbours. The first objective in working lands is subsistence. Once this requirement is met, surplus coconuts are made into copra to cover taxes, school fees, church contributions, and modest store purchases.

Most households use their closest lands for daily needs. Each household in the Gilberts may tap ten or more coconut spathes for toddy which, in its raw state or boiled into a syrup, is a part of most meals. Some households in the Ellice Islands also tap coconut palms but there the milk of immature green nuts is commonly drunk — a practice regarded as wasteful in the more austere environment of the Gilberts. The flesh of mature nuts is the most common of all coconut foods and may be eaten raw, cooked in various forms, or grated and pressed to produce coconut cream which is also extensively used in food preparation while the spongy heart of germinating nuts is usually kept for infants too young to cope with hard foods. Coconuts dominate the vegetation but pandanus, various berries and, where soils and water permit, breadfruit are also grown. The lands closest to the village also provide other resources for their owners and those living nearby — pandanus leaves for thatch or weaving, for example. Firewood may be gathered by any who choose while more substantial items — timber for housebuilding or canoes, for example, can be taken only with the permission of the owners.

More distant lands usually offer all these resources as well, but unless there is pressure on lands close to the village, they are used less frequently, and then usually as a source of coconuts for the making of copra. In Butaritari, where the complex indigenous land tenure system was compounded by colonial land commissions which made much of the land subject to joint tenure, it is common to take 'turns' — ranging from a week to a year — at gathering nuts; a practice that encourages maximum use as each participant makes sure of his full share. On lands held under *kaitasi* (eat as one) tenure in the Ellice Islands, collective exploitation of the land is more common; or the plot, if it is big enough, may be divided for practical purposes, but not legally, among its owners. Although it is no longer common for households to store nuts for long periods as a matter of course, and the traditional storage houses which used to be an essential part of every Gilbertese household are now seen only occasionally, some households in the south automatically begin to save nuts at the onset of drought.

Most of the nuts that in former times would have been stored, those in excess of immediate household needs, are now made into copra which still retains its pre-eminent position in the village cash economy. But copra making is hard work, and it is clear that when the price to producers drops below a perceived 'uneconomic' price, about 6.6 cents a kilogramme in 1973, production tapers off rapidly and

villagers either seek additional remittances from relatives, draw on savings, or go without. When prices are high, above 15 cents a kilogramme in 1975, some landowners will actually move ahead of production and harvest nuts from the trees without waiting for them to fall.³

Because of the importance of land for both subsistence and cash income, and its perceived intrinsic value, owners are reluctant to part with land even if they have holdings in excess of their needs. Under legislation dating from the early colonial period, 'native land' — virtually all land within the Gilbert and Ellice groups — could not be sold to aliens and could be leased only under strict controls. Private sales and leases among Islanders on South Tarawa have become increasingly common since the Second World War and since the Government itself began to lease larger areas. Renting, and even sales, are generally tolerated in this world of wage employment but elsewhere the sale of land is seen to bring shame on the seller for it is only in this century that colonialism has made him a true owner of his lands. Most Islanders still adhere to a more ancient law that the current owner simply possesses land for his lifetime, as a heritage from his forebears to be passed on to his children. Thus the selling of land is a shameful act because it puts the owner ahead of his children, and his children's children; because it implies that the owner is too lazy to make a living by gardening, fishing and by cutting copra; and when the sale is to a 'stranger' from another island, the act is doubly shameful because it encroaches upon the primary right of the people who really *belong* to the island to support themselves from its resources. Apart from South Tarawa, land sales are most common on Butaritari and Abemama where land is relatively plentiful, cash incomes are high, there is a degree of familiarity with the cash economy, and where those who choose to sell their land, generally the families of former chiefs, can afford to ignore the disapproval of their fellow Islanders.⁴

As well as providing subsistence, land is still the main source of cash income. Copra is made from coconuts surplus to subsistence needs but whether surplus nuts *are* made into copra is determined by the prevailing price and the current cash needs of the household balanced against the various sources of cash income available to it. Whereas a man who fails to cultivate *babai* because he can afford to buy his food is considered to be particularly lazy because of the intrinsic importance attached to *babai*, one who does not bother to cut copra even when prices are high may be mildly censured but is more likely to be considered fortunate. There are, however, very few families on the outer islands which do not need to cut copra to meet at least some of their cash needs.

In 1973, for example, when rainfall was close to average on most islands, and the price constant at 6.6 cents per kilogramme, mean household incomes from copra ranged from below \$50 on some of the southern Gilberts to \$150 at Abemama with an overall mean of about

\$80 for the Gilbert group. In 1974, however, when the copra price rose from 6.6 cents a kilogramme to 8.8 cents in April, to 13.2 cents in June and to 17.6 cents in September, production as well as returns increased dramatically on most islands.⁵ This trend was even more evident in the Ellice group where few producers felt copra worth the effort of cutting until the price reached 17.6 cents. In 1973, because of the combined effect of the low price and a drought which lasted through 1971 and 1972, the group produced only 65 tonnes of copra which yielded about \$2.20 per household; in 1974, the higher price and plentiful rainfall saw copra production leap to 560 tonnes, with an average return of \$25 per household; a drier season in 1975 saw production fall again to 127 tonnes which brought in about \$10 per household.⁶ This same decline was also evident in the Gilbert group where the 1974 production of 9000 tonnes dropped to 2700 tonnes in 1975 with a consequent halving of copra incomes even with the price sustained at 17.6 cents a kilogramme.⁷

Copra, as a source of cash income, is clearly more important in the Gilberts than the Ellice Islands. Not only are a higher proportion of Ellice Islanders employed away from their home islands but their remittances tend to be larger and more frequent than those sent back to the Gilberts. Thus of mean household incomes of about \$250 in the the Ellice group in 1973 less than 5 per cent came from copra; in the boom year of 1974 household incomes were closer to \$500 of which nearly one-third came from copra. Household incomes of this level are rare in the outer Gilbert Islands. Only Abemama, the most fertile island in the group (and among the more sparsely populated), could match the household incomes of the Ellice Islands in either 1973 or 1974. In the Gilberts, household incomes were mostly between \$100 and \$200 in 1973, and between \$200 and \$300 in 1974, but then dropped even below the 1973 levels in 1975.⁸ On most of the Gilbert Islands in 1973, copra accounted for at least half of household income, the most notable exceptions being the five southernmost islands where only half, less in some cases, came from copra. In 1974, a year in which remittance income also rose, copra still produced nearly two-thirds of all income in the northern Gilberts, an even higher proportion in the central Gilberts, and more than one-half in the south.

But 1974 must be seen as aberrant, as a bonus year. With annual household incomes usually less than \$200, there is little surplus once basic costs have been met. Local government taxes might take \$10 a year, church contributions and school fees a similar amount each and, when they are collected, licence fees for dogs and bicycles perhaps \$2. These figures would vary depending on the policies of particular local governments, the land-holdings of each household and the religious enthusiasm of its members. Nonetheless, most households have fixed commitments of some \$30 a year and when these cannot be met from available funds a request for help will be sent to a relative in wage employment. Very little money is put into savings and, except for cash

conscious wage and salary earners, is seldom saved for long periods. Bank accounts are custodians of small surpluses accumulated in good years, the balance of an unexpectedly large remittance, or small savings put by in anticipation of taxes or school fees. Store purchases take up the balance of household income. Food is the major expense and this may supplement household meals or, on some islands, be presented together with traditional foods on ceremonial occasions. There is also the occasional purchase of material and ready-made clothing because traditional dress is now generally worn only for dancing or on special occasions; and some expenditure on hardware items like fishing lines and hooks, kerosene, radio batteries and bicycle parts.

Incomes on this scale can give a lift, or even a degree of relative affluence, to a spartan subsistence life, but only the richest families can afford to buy expensive capital items from rural incomes. Motor cycles are still rare but most households have at least one working bicycle and a canoe made from imported timber; more than half have sewing machines and radios; about one-third have pressure lamps and nylon fishing nets while all have a few pots and pans and basic kitchen utensils. Almost all these items have been brought back to their home islands by those who have worked at Ocean Island or Nauru. The distribution of these luxuries is limited but it does not mean that the less fortunate are necessarily deprived of their use. Borrowing from relations, while shameful in so far as it admits that the household or individual is less than independent, is nonetheless an accepted method of sharing resources.

Less acceptable are cash transactions at a personal level. This reluctance to trade with relatives and neighbours is related to the belief that households should be self-sufficient, that they should grow, catch or make what they need, and that where cash is needed it should be earned within the household or solicited from relatives. (Occasional exceptions are made. Thus 'strangers' posted to an outer island by the Government usually form a small community of their own and their households may operate towards one another as though they were related but such behaviour is rare in village society.) There is a fundamental belief that it is shameful to exploit or be exploited by one's fellow Islanders, but it is permissible to deal with institutions which are seen as being impersonal and alien. Thus it is acceptable to be employed by central or local government, or by the local co-operative society, but not to work for wages paid by a landowner wishing to turn his nuts into copra. Any surplus of a perishable commodity like fish should be given away, not sold, and households that must sell fish, bread, or handicrafts to raise cash, generally do so through the co-operative store. Even if their anonymity is not completely protected they do not have the embarrassment of trading directly with their customers.

In some respects, however, the strictures on commercial dealings by individuals are beginning to weaken. Thus some communities,

Nanumea for example, which might censure regular trading in fish caught by traditional means will tolerate the sale of an unexpected surplus so long as family obligations have been met, or sales by owners of outboard motors in recognition of the cost and scale of the activity involved.⁹ And at Butaritari, which has had a long heritage of cash dealings, the sale of food and other commodities is accepted, although those who offer goods for sale are careful to justify their activities on the grounds that they are offering a service to those who want it and they are thus serving the community rather than themselves.¹⁰

On South Tarawa an even greater change is discernible. There, the mixing of people from all islands, together with the presence of several hundred foreigners, creates a situation in which Islanders can operate in a less personal fashion. Thus it is acceptable to sell surplus fish in the Betio market; fishing has become a recognised occupation; commodities like salt fish can be sent to relatives on Tarawa for sale to all-comers; and a few, like a group of fishermen from Tamana, have been able to establish commercial operations that would not be tolerated elsewhere. On the outer islands it is much more difficult to establish private businesses. Collective activity is preferred because it offers protection from individual decision-making and the charge that an entrepreneur is self-seeking or unduly ambitious. It is for this same reason that when food or handicrafts are sold on outer islands it is at a standard price, preferably fixed by a group or club, which may bear little or no relationship to the work involved. Prices may change gradually, but a seller cannot adjust his price to meet demand or to ensure the same return on his time that some other activity, like copra-making, may provide; if he considers the returns to be inadequate he will simply cease to participate.

The success of the co-operative societies, with their mixture of local ownership and government supervision, can be attributed to both economic and social factors; they eliminate the profits of foreign traders, they provide a necessary service, the annual bonus based on purchases is an important component in cash income, and the only individuals who buy, sell and make decisions are themselves employees of the societies. On most of the Gilbert Islands this co-operative principle has been extended with the formation of *mronron*—the word *mronron* means 'round', hence mutuality or sharing—which are small trading associations whose membership may be based on either kinship or locality. The mechanics may vary but most *mronron* buy from the local co-operative store and then sell in smaller quantities—tea by the matchboxful, for example—at a slight profit, and at almost any hours. Payments may be in cash or in coconuts which the members then make into copra and sell at a profit. Responsibilities and labour are shared among members, profits are generally small and more often reinvested than distributed. Many *mronron* allow their members to borrow cash, indeed some compel them to do so at rates of about 10 per cent per month, to help finance other *mronron* activities.¹¹ There are also *mronron* organised on a

'home island' basis among the migrant population on South Tarawa. They supplement the social role of the various island associations and can be politically significant as in the case of Tiwau Awira, whose service to the Nikunau *mronron* as well as his experience as a government accountant, helped to bring electoral success in 1978 and subsequent appointment as Minister of Finance.

This enthusiasm for *mronron*, like participation in church activities, or family occasions like weddings, is largely explained by the desire of each household to maintain and protect its independence, to appear as good as, but not better than, its neighbours. Although *babai*-weighing competitions used to be held on some islands, differences of wealth and status are now generally expressed in more subtle terms—the quality or quantity of food presented for a feast for example—and are more acceptable if expressed in such traditional ways. The man who displays his wealth in the first concrete and corrugated aluminium house in his village may be scorned rather than respected for he is ignoring the basic principle that communities should advance together not as individuals. But land and wealth are not the basis of all status: even the poorest man may still have his moment by contributing the largest *babai* or *pulaka* to an important feast, or when he has the fastest canoe in a race and takes care (obvious to all participants and observers) to protect the sensitivities of other competitors by ensuring that his winning margin is not too great.

Apart from canoe racing in the Gilbert Islands, individual competitions are rare on the outer islands although swimming and running races have become a part of Queen's Birthday celebrations on Tarawa and are sometimes organised in schools, and on Tarawa tennis has become a popular pastime for a few. Most dancing competitions, for example, are organised on a village basis. Being in the team *is* more important than winning; in an apparently casual game of volley ball it would be unusual to find close kin on opposing sides. The same is largely true of religion—families tend to have a common affiliation and the fact of church membership, of belonging, is still more important than the level of enthusiasm. This public declaration of belonging to a church, a club or even, on occasions, a family is sometimes emphasised through the wearing of uniforms or clothes cut from a common bolt of cloth.

In 1973 a little more than half the Gilbertese population claimed adherence to the Roman Catholic church, and 47 per cent to the Gilbert Islands Protestant Church (successor to the LMS), with smaller numbers being members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Bahai faith, and other minor sects. Some 95 per cent of Ellice Islanders belonged to the Ellice Islands [Protestant] Church.¹² In some communities, for example in the Protestant Ellice Islands, or in the predominantly Roman Catholic northern Gilberts, a single *maneaba*, whether the property of the village or the church, may be the focal point of village life both sacred and secular. Any families who find themselves in a religious minority may thus be excluded from

some activities because adherents of either church still find it difficult to enter the premises of the other even for a secular function. Where loyalties are more evenly divided it is common for there to be a village *maneaba* as well as a *maneaba* maintained by each church.

In most Gilbertese villages the *maneaba*—built with local logs and thatch, though occasionally with a concrete floor—still dominates a cluster of thatched dwellings, though both may stand in stark contrast to an imposing church complete with spire, bell-tower and stained-glass windows. Other buildings in permanent materials are rare except for government offices, copra sheds, co-operative stores and the houses of missionaries. All islands in both groups have at least one primary school built of concrete and corrugated aluminium. In the Ellice Islands most *maneapa*, like the churches, were built of modern permanent materials by the 1970s and, relics of earlier days, pastors' houses with thick walls of coral limestone could still be seen. The only island with significant numbers of modern houses was Funafuti where, in the wake of Hurricane Bebe in 1972, fibrolite permanent dwellings replaced local houses which had displayed a mixed ancestry of traditional materials and American war surplus and where, after separation, there was a spate of house-building for incoming civil servants.

Now that the churches have largely withdrawn from the educational field, most schools are government-owned and run. The teaching of literacy and basic arithmetic together with a heavy emphasis on doctrine and Bible knowledge has now given way to state education. In the late 1970s a programme for the integration of most Roman Catholic primary schools into the state system left the churches with a limited secondary education programme and the training of those who would later assume positions in the church. This secularisation of education has affected Islanders' perceptions of both education and of the church.

Formal education was once part of the religious experience and, even if deemed to be irrelevant for most purposes, was accepted for that reason. Then, the emphasis was upon the church, village life and literacy in the vernacular. But from the 1950s the rapid expansion of the public service and of wage employment generally, coincided with an increasing emphasis upon the use of English as the language of instruction. It is ironical in the extreme that in the mid-1970s, as the government of the Gilbert Islands planned to set up community high schools with a curriculum oriented towards village life for children unable to attend the government high school, and as planners tried to make education in the primary schools 'more relevant' to island life, they were taking education even further away from the needs and demands being expressed by pupils and their parents. Education has become the path to wage employment; island schools are supported in the hope that the child might prove bright enough or lucky enough to be among the 5 per cent admitted to a government or mission secondary school, that they might then get a job that will allow them to

enjoy the good life for themselves and help to support their families. It is one of those paradoxes of acculturation that while wage employment is keenly sought because of the 'easy' life it permits, those who find it are expected to have unchanged values and attitudes despite the experience.

For some, wage employment is an alternative to life on an outer island, but more often it is seen as an essential feature of it. It is now part of a man's growing up that he should work and travel away from home; his opportunity to make a family contribution as real as cutting copra or fishing, by setting up his family with a bicycle, a sewing machine and timber for a canoe. Cash is now an essential component of island life, and remittances a major source of cash income. It is questionable whether many islands could support their natural populations—that is, if all absentees returned and remittances were halted—without a dramatic fall in living standards. Even now, in times of drought, some Islanders cannot make enough copra to meet their very modest cash needs.

In 1973, only two-thirds of Gilbert and Ellice Islanders lived on their home islands. A home island is largely a matter of perception, determined by descent and therefore by landholding or prospective inheritance, not necessarily by residence. Thus individuals might well call 'home' an island they had never seen. Maiana, immediately to the south of Tarawa, was home to only half those who claimed it as their home island; Butaritari and Makin in the far north, and Abemama—all with plentiful resources and cash-earning opportunities—still held about 70 per cent of their people, all other islands fell somewhere in between.¹³ Altogether 14 861 people, one-quarter of the Colony's population, was resident on South Tarawa. On Betio, the population of 6381 lived at a density in excess of 5000 per square kilometre; on the remainder of South Tarawa, from Bairiki to Boniki, the density was nearly 1200 per square kilometre. Of the other islands only Ocean Island and Funafuti—both ports and administration centres—had a density exceeding 300 per square kilometre.¹⁴ Households on South Tarawa, with an average of 7.5 persons in each, were rather larger than was common on outer islands but this is easily understood in the light of further analysis which shows that 10 per cent of private households on Tarawa were composed of three or more nuclear families (double the national proportion) and that 30 per cent (compared with 20 per cent nationally) were composed of two family units.¹⁵ Except for a small number who have accommodation guaranteed by employers, it is usual for new migrants to move in with close relatives and contribute to the upkeep of that household until it is possible to find work and then, ideally, move to a separate dwelling.

Urbanisation is a common enough phenomenon and the motives for urban migration in the Pacific Islands are fairly well understood although their relative importance may vary from country to country. Until the 1950s Ocean Island was the only place within the Colony

where people from all islands lived and worked together. But it was an artificial environment, created and controlled by the BPC, where living patterns, population density, working hours and conditions were all maintained by an alien authority. There was no parallel in the Gilbert and Ellice groups before the war because Ocean Island was the centre of administrative activity as well as the phosphate industry. In the 1940s and 1950s, after the capital had been moved to South Tarawa, and the Government had become committed to the provision of a higher level of social services, it forestalled the urban migration that similar developments encouraged elsewhere by controlling movement to Tarawa though without the legal sanction that had previously existed under the Native Passenger Ordinance.¹⁶ In Bernacchi's time, only *Kain Tarawa*—the landowners—and the families of government employees were permitted to live on South Tarawa. But in the 1960s, the continued expansion of government activity, and the building programme that was an essential part of it, generated an increasing number of unskilled jobs. In the 1960s, too, the United Nations began to take a closer interest in Pacific dependencies and the Colony Government, while affecting nonchalance, became more sensitive on issues of human rights and, specifically, on the restriction of movement. It accepted, though reluctantly, that controlled internal migration could not continue through the decolonisation process without becoming a contentious issue. People move for employment, for education which might open the way to skilled employment or, in a manner long typical of Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders, to visit relatives for what might become a prolonged stay. For some, travel is an end in itself, a chance to observe and enjoy the bright lights, the cinema and relative freedom from family control. The migrants are mostly young adults, both single and married. Permanent migration is seldom planned and even when it becomes so in fact, is seldom perceived as such because most migrants still intend to return home at some time in the future.

For the Government, the planners, health officials and the police, urbanisation causes problems. It forces a reorientation of priorities and the redirection of a large proportion of expenditure into a constantly expanding urban area. And in turn this expansion creates even more jobs and thus perpetuates the flow of migrants, and the demand for funds. But while the Government worries about overcrowding, urban crime, and sanitation, those that they worry about show little concern. From their point of view the benefits of urban living easily outweigh the costs, and in both rural and urban areas their social organisation has proved itself capable of adapting to a constant migrant flow.

Only a few households, almost all of them *Kain Tarawa*, have anything like the land resources available to outer island households, and the Tarawa lagoon is polluted and depleted of some marine species. Households are larger than on outer islands, and dwellings in some areas are packed closely together making privacy difficult.

There are distractions and temptations that do not exist on the outer islands and the collective pressures towards conformity and discipline that can be applied in communities with a localised identity are diminished in the vast artificial village that is Tarawa. But there are compensations. In 1973 nearly two-thirds of the men and one-fifth of the women were in wage employment, giving most households at least one wage earner and more often two. Clerical workers and tradesmen earned an average of \$600 in 1974, those better qualified, or with more experience, earned as much as \$4000, unskilled workers as little as \$250. Government workers with established positions and some labourers were given housing at subsidised rates, with the quality of housing depending essentially upon status and ranging from European-style bungalows with all services down to fibrolite shells with concrete floors, aluminium roofs and, for their occupants, access to communal water supplies and reef latrines. In addition to government housing, each major Christian church has a station on Tarawa which has attracted satellite housing especially where schooling is available. There are also villages of *Kain Tarawa* spread throughout the atoll cheek by jowl with government buildings and housing. All established areas of housing also have fringe-dwelling squatters — those few who have no relatives who can find room for them. Irrespective of the style of dwelling, households are essentially the same: the household retains the flexibility of composition that is so characteristic of it on outer islands: relatives, newcomers to South Tarawa, are housed until they can establish an independent household. Even while visiting they are regarded as members of the household and, in accordance with their skills and means, are expected to contribute to its well-being.

While most households can still rely to some extent upon traditional foods — especially fish, coconut and pandanus — the supply of *babai* is limited and much if it is affected by an introduced beetle which gives the roots a bitter taste. House sites are small, meaning that most households have few trees that they can call their own and hence they have to arrange access to neighbouring lands, or to the under-used trees in the compounds of European residents. Consumption of imported foods is much higher than on outer islands — more than one-quarter of the national import bill is for food and most of this is consumed on Tarawa. Most households can put together local food and store purchases to make a diet that is adequate if not exciting but for those very few without relatives, without land and without wages in the urban environment, life is marginal with malnutrition, but not starvation, a real threat.

Urban Tarawa thus displays a great range of wealth at the individual and household levels, from the fringe-dwelling squatters to the relatively wealthy 400 or so Europeans with their large houses, cars, motor cycles, stereo sets and expensive imported food. And it is hardly surprising that there are attempts to redress this imbalance. Thus theft, which ironically seemed to increase in frequency as

security wire was fitted to European houses, became more common in the 1970s. The main targets were cash, liquor, food, cigarettes, transistor radios and cassette tape-recorders. Thefts were almost invariably directed at Europeans by Islanders, not because of an anti-European feeling as such, but because Europeans were seen as a group known to have goods worth stealing and, in local terms, to have a seemingly endless supply of cash. While crimes against property were most commonly directed at Europeans and at government property (also regarded as in the possession of Europeans), Europeans were seldom the victims of explicit racial antagonism or crimes of violence. Violence, as on the outer islands, was generally caused by a combination of liquor — whether sour toddy or beer — and an insult, real or imagined. As in former times any Gilbertese who believes his reputation or that of his family has been slurred by another is prone to take up arms in defence. Violence is much less common in Ellice Islands society, even where drunkenness is a factor. Perhaps surprisingly in the light of tensions in the 1960s and 1970s, violence between Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders was rare, with racial rivalry finding other expressions.

As the colonial period drew to a close the restrictive permit system which controlled access to liquor was dismantled, and discrimination on racial grounds removed. Even so, imported liquor is still largely confined to Tarawa and Ocean Island; many outer islands are effectively 'dry' because of the influence of mission teaching and because, in any case, the purchase even of beer is beyond the means of most Islanders. Another hazard of urban living is the sometimes deadly combination of liquor, poorly maintained motor vehicles, inexperienced riders or drivers and narrow roads lined with coconut palms.

With the growth of an urban lifestyle for a quarter of the population, and migration being 'circular' more often in intention than in fact, there are Islanders who cannot climb coconut palms, cut toddy, cultivate *babai* or *pulaka*, or make canoes. The skills are not disappearing totally, but the level of their performance is diminishing in the urban environment, and the number of specialists of any given craft or skill is declining not least because potential teacher and pupil are on different islands and these are skills which would normally be passed on only within a family.

By the mid 1970s, the adaptation to western ways that had been encouraged by urbanisation was most marked among Ellice Islanders. Without relatives on Tarawa, and therefore denied access to land beyond their house-sites, they became more quickly dependent upon imported goods. But there was more to it than this, for the Ellice Islanders had always been more willing than the Gilbertese to deal with innovation on its own terms. Thus while atoll life modified by some western influence was still fairly much the same at household level in both groups, there were considerable differences in attitude towards tradition, towards modernisation, and toward government.

There were also differences in the response to employment in the public service. Not simply did the Ellice Islanders respond positively to any educational opportunity but they generally fitted in well to the hierarchical structure of the civil service. They were prepared to accept responsibility, to give instructions and, with an extroverted type of humour, to generally act in the manner expected by their expatriate masters. By comparison, these same expatriates found the Gilbertese to be dour, almost surly, resentful of direction, and unwilling to give instructions because they might be thought arrogant. These differences also affected each race's perception of the other, and their awareness tended to keep the races and cultures apart even where they lived side by side.

Despite the problems, pressures and adjustments, urban dwelling is still the preferred lifestyle for those who participate in it (even when the town in which they live is scarcely worthy of the name, or the envy of many of those who do not), because it offers a more exciting and, in gradually acquired western terms, a more affluent existence. But there remains a universal recognition of the 'foreignness' of such a lifestyle, of the way in which western-style living is only a garnish on customary ways based on land and kinship which still have their inherent validity. Perhaps this was most clearly seen in the way in which hundreds of people worked for the colonial Government, and thousands lived under its rule, without identifying themselves with it in any meaningful way. Government was an alien device, created and controlled by Europeans, from which money and a bewildering range of decrees flowed. Even in the 1970s, only a very small élite who were seen to inherit the Government, and the powers and privileges associated with it, perceived the Colony as a state-in-embryo. Islanders identified with their families and their home islands, and only saw themselves as Gilbertese or Ellice Islanders as a very poor third. On Tarawa, where the two races were drawn together in increasing numbers, the members of each racial community gradually began to see for themselves a future that did not include the other, and Britain was obliged to divide its inheritance between them because they could not be persuaded to share.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Towards self-government

In those British dependencies where European colonists were numerically as well as economically dominant, it was common practice for both settler and, albeit in more token fashion, indigenous populations to be consulted in government. Advisory councils in which a governor presided over appointed official and unofficial members often marked the first stage of the evolutionary process towards self-government. Next a legislative council, again under official control, though usually including a minority of elected members was established. Although both these stages represented some degree of constitutional advance by allowing local interests to participate in government, it was not until elected members of the legislative council were admitted to the executive council and given some responsibility for policy formation that a real transfer of power began. In subsequent stages, elected members were given sub-ministerial portfolios, officials were reduced to a minority in both legislature and executive, and the governor withdrew from politics as cabinet government was introduced. Alongside this constitutional change there were other developments — political parties, for example, an independent civil service and judiciary and, more hopefully, a free press. This, then, was a common pattern of evolution towards a Westminster constitution. When decolonisation became a pressing issue from the mid-20th century, successive British governments looked to introduce this same model to the tropical or sub-tropical dependencies in which European settlers were a small minority though they might have a political role out of all proportion with their numbers. In a few cases, most notably South Africa and for some time Southern Rhodesia, these minorities clung to power despite demands for majority rule, but in most a staged diminution of settler power was an essential part of the decolonisation process.

The Westminster model proved capable of infinite variation to meet, on the one hand, diverse circumstances in the dependencies and, on the other, Britain's overwhelming desire to create viable states from the fragments of empire. Thus executive committees in tandem with a co-ordinating government council were tried in Ceylon, India became the first republic within the Commonwealth, Nigeria became a federal republic, Malaya emerged as a federation, Ghana as an independent state, and a number of the Caribbean dependencies settled for internal self-government in association with the United Kingdom. Each of these paths to self-determination became a

precedent in itself, an alternative model subsequently built upon or modified by others.¹ Other variants that subsequently emerged were less welcome — one-party rule, dictatorships, the changing of government by *coups d'état* rather than by elections — and these, together with the devastation and genocide inspired by tribalism and challenges to territorial integrity, made the United Kingdom rather more cautious of its constitutional exports and even more willing to compromise with local conditions and aspirations in pursuit of a lasting constitution for the few remaining dependencies.

Even against this background of diversity, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony had an unusual constitutional history.² Like so many other dependencies, the peoples within its boundaries were not a nation, they shared neither ideology nor language, and they recognised no common leaders. Moreover, they had little chance to develop a corporate identity because their islands were scattered across a thousand miles of ocean. Their country was poor, employment opportunities were few, and hence mobility was restricted, even controlled at times. For many years these difficulties of cost and distance were in themselves sufficient to negate any plans for the introduction of representative institutions on a national basis. The private European population consisted of a few missionaries, fewer traders, and those employed at Ocean Island. Apart from the moguls of the phosphate industry who preferred to manipulate Resident Commissioners in less formal surroundings, or to make supplication directly to their colonial masters in London, there were few men of substance among them, and no representatives at all of that class of planters, merchants and professional men who tended to dominate colonial legislatures. Thus neither Europeans nor Islanders pressed for representation and when, at the time of annexation, some thought was given to the creation of an advisory council and again after the Second World War when Maude suggested a Council of Representatives, officials allowed themselves to be dissuaded by the practical difficulties involved. Once the inevitabilities of the post-war world caught up with the Colony in the 1960s, however, such rationalisations could no longer be maintained. Nonetheless, the problems of cost and distance were as important in shaping the Colony's path as were the precedents established elsewhere and, at crucial stages, the personalities and particular views of Colony officials.

The Native Magistrates' Conference, which met annually from 1952, was seen primarily as a local government training course and only incidentally as a development that might foster political awareness and some sort of national identity. In 1956 it was expanded into a biennial Colony Conference, a more overtly political body even though its membership was heavily weighted towards local civil servants. Then, in the 1960s, as the Wind of Change began to blow through Africa, and the United Nations became more strident in its denunciation of colonialism, the desire of Britain to dismantle its

Empire, not anti-colonial protest, saw the first serious moves towards self-government in Britain's Pacific dependencies. A Legislative Council replaced an Advisory Council in the Solomons, Fiji moved toward ministerial government, and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony was given an Advisory Council and, at the same time, an Executive Council. This latter deviation from the usual pattern was followed by another in 1967 when the Advisory Council was superseded by a House of Representatives, which had an elected majority but only an advisory function, and a Governing Council (with an official majority) which had both legislative and executive powers. Under this arrangement the House of Representatives provided experience in parliamentary procedures, for all legislation was submitted to it for discussion, and members had the right to ask questions and put motions. But it also generated the frustration that is inevitable when elected representatives are denied any real responsibility. Then, in 1971, more orthodox Legislative and Executive Councils were established before a House of Assembly was given legislative power on all except a few reserved subjects, and ministerial government was introduced in 1974.

Although the Colony moved from total dependence to self-government in little more than a decade, this reflected pressures from Britain and Islanders' awareness of developments elsewhere in Oceania rather than any widespread desire for political change. Strong paternal rule for half a century, and the policy of limiting advanced education to a few, meant that in the 1960s and early 1970s there was only a small educated class which had any real interest in, or understanding of, this alien political system. Because most of these people were employed by Government on South Tarawa, political awareness was almost entirely confined to that island before self-government. This situation was by no means unusual in dependencies where a western-educated urban population commonly provided the stimulus and guidance for indigenous political demands supported, reluctantly at times, by lesser-educated rural dwellers who accepted seemingly informed leadership on matters of which they knew little. The prevailing view among community leaders on the outer islands was, and to a large extent still is, that central constitutional development was a 'Government' matter, and was therefore of little importance in the day to day realities of village life. Many old people argued that they did not understand such things; their young men on Tarawa, because they were employed by Government, *did* understand and, therefore, should represent them. Others took the view that the position of island representative, with its fringe benefits of a salary and free trips to Tarawa, should be shared around. This low level of interest in political development has been reflected in the slow development of political parties. Of the first two parties formed in 1965, the Gilbertese National Party, informally endorsed the nomination of a few candidates through to the early 1970s but did not bind them to any particular policy if they were elected. The other, the

Christian Democratic Party, had faded by the time the first elections were held in 1967. In the mid-1970s politicians on each side of the House formed themselves into an informal but relatively stable caucus but without any party organisation outside the House. For its part, the colonial Government consistently discouraged the formation of parties on the grounds that while parties *might* encourage interest and participation in politics, the Colony lacked the economic specialisation or disparities of wealth that might lead to ideological or philosophical divisions. Officials believed it was inevitable that parties would be based on district rivalries, or differences of race or religion and thus would further exacerbate tensions that were already acute. They tried to promote the view that politicians were beholden to their constituencies and not, unless they were ministers, to their colleagues or to ideology, and that voters should choose the candidate who, as an individual, could best serve the constituency and the country as it proceeded to independence.

The Colony Conference, which met biennially from 1965, developed out of the Magistrates' Conferences which had been held over the previous five years. All Native Magistrates, eight regional delegates elected by the Island Councils (three from the northern and central Gilberts, three from the Phoenix and southern Gilbert Islands, and two from the Ellice Islands), three mission representatives and three local civil servants made up the membership of the Conference which met with the Resident Commissioner as chairman and the District Commissioner for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands as his deputy. The Conference was called with the approval of the Colonial Office but had no statutory sanction.

The Colony Conference was a sounding board for local opinion and a forum where island problems and grievances were discussed. Because so many of its members held positions of responsibility on outer islands, it was helpful in disseminating information. At this time the Colony had no radio service and no information service to speak of and, in the absence of touring by officials, the Government had few means or, rather, provided few means, of informing the populace of revised laws and policies. Thus the Conference still had a basic educative function. Heads of Departments addressed the Conference and members could also put forward subjects for discussion. The Conference would then divide into discussion committees chaired by the local civil servants. The English and Gilbertese languages were used during full sessions and both vernaculars during committee sessions. The informality of the Conference, the use of the three languages and, in particular, the way in which members were encouraged to participate meant that despite its lack of political sophistication, the Colony Conference was probably the most successful consultative body that existed in the Colony's lifetime. It was important that senior expatriate officials addressed the Conference, then left it, and did not remain to inhibit its proceedings.³

The Conference also had a wider but unintended political impact. Over the period that the Conference met, a degree of antagonism was emerging between Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders in the civil service. Leading members of both communities — most notably Reuben Uatiosa, a broadcasting official and a founder of the Gilbertese National Party, and Henry Naisali who became one of the senior Islanders in the Colony's civil service and, after separation, Financial Secretary for Tuvalu — were involved in the Conference and, in the absence of expatriate officials, committee sessions in the later years discussed much more fundamental issues of politics and development than was indicated by either agenda or minutes. As a consequence the issues that were assuming importance on Tarawa became known on the outer islands where, as a rule, the two races did not come into contact. In later years, as politics became increasingly the business of politicians and English-speaking civil servants, the gap between representatives and represented tended to widen.

In August 1960 Bernacchi sounded out the Colony Conference on future constitutional development. His suggestion that elected representatives might replace the Magistrates aroused little enthusiasm as the latter thought that it could lead to a lowering of their status. They acknowledged the need for more regular consultation, however, and after some hesitation gave unanimous support for the establishment of an Advisory Council. It was yet another example of that tendency for Islanders to offer advice only when asked, then to do so tentatively, and to quickly acquiesce with official proposals—at least in public—as soon as there was any clear indication of a government preference. Because such a council would have to meet at least twice a year, the delegates accepted that membership would probably have to be restricted to those living on or near Tarawa and that a majority of the members might have to be local civil servants. It was agreed also that there was still a place for the Colony Conference which would continue to meet every two years.⁴

The Conference next met in October 1962 when V.J. Andersen, the new Resident Commissioner, put forward firm proposals for the establishment of an Advisory Council. There were to be five official and twelve unofficial members, all fluent in English, appointed by the Resident Commissioner. Two regional representatives would be chosen from the northern Gilberts, central Gilberts, southern Gilberts (including the Phoenix Islands) and the Ellice Islands; there were also to be representatives from the missions, the local business community and the British Phosphate Commissioners. The Council would meet at least once a year and the Resident Commissioner would be obliged to consult it on all important matters of policy and legislation.⁵

The two-year delay in establishing the Council was partly caused by the presence of new arrivals in the positions of Resident Commissioner and High Commissioner but more important was Andersen's desire to ensure that the first recognisable stage of constitutional development should be shaped by the peculiar

circumstances of the Colony and not simply based on an imported model. He believed that in the light of doubts as to the Colony's financial future, and because of its racial structure and geographical fragmentation, some deviation from the accepted pattern of development might be desirable. He also feared that if the orthodox model were followed the people of the Colony might come to think in terms of a series of clearly defined steps leading inexorably to independence. He favoured a more flexible approach in the early stages that would make it possible to work out a more satisfactory constitutional progression leading, perhaps, to internal self-government and a special relationship with Britain.⁶

Initially, Andersen considered the establishment of an Advisory Council, which would be consulted on broad issues and the annual Estimates, and a Resident Commissioner's Council, not necessarily drawn from the Advisory Council, which would meet four times a year and be more involved in general administration.⁷ Then, at discussions between Andersen and Sir David Trench, the High Commissioner, in July 1962 it was agreed that because the creation of two advisory bodies might give the impression, both within and outside the Colony, that there was no genuine transference of responsibility, an Executive Council should be established.⁸ The creation of the Executive Council while the Colony was still at this early stage of constitutional development marked a significant departure from the usual pattern followed by British dependencies and, coming after the introduction of traditional Legislative and Executive Councils in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, indicated a new flexibility in the High Commission territories.

The Executive Council, established by Order in Council, met for the first time in January 1964. The Assistant Resident Commissioner was a member *ex-officio*; the Resident Commissioner appointed three other official and four unofficial members and, as *ex-officio* chairman, was a member himself. He was obliged to consult the Council on most matters but could act alone in cases of emergency and could disregard advice given by the Council; if he did so he was obliged to justify his action to the High Commissioner. Such an occasion never arose, however, and assuming that all members were present, could occur only if an official chose to dissent from government policy. With the establishment of the Executive Council the Resident Commissioner, as well as the High Commissioner, was given the power to make laws for the Colony—a step that pointed towards the eventual severance of links between Tarawa and Honiara (finally achieved in 1972) and the recognition from London that there was no need for such an intermediary when modern communications allowed easy and regular contact between Tarawa and London.

The Advisory Council was established by ordinance in January 1963 and, under the legislation, the Resident Commissioner was to consult the Council on such matters as he saw fit or as the High Commissioner should direct. The composition of the Council was

more generally defined than Andersen had at first suggested—the Assistant Resident Commissioner and four other official members and twelve unofficial members—although the provision that all should be fluent in English was retained. Unofficial members could serve for a maximum of five years. In practice, however, Andersen adhered fairly closely to his original guidelines except that no representative of the British Phosphate Commissioners ever sat on the Council—not surprising, perhaps, at a time when the Colony Government was waging a vigorous campaign to secure greater returns from Ocean Island phosphates.

In the Council, sectarian differences occasionally came to the surface, as over the introduction over a new liquor ordinance in 1963,⁹ but generally there was constructive discussion of legislation and policy issues without the parochialism that was to characterise the debates of the House of Representatives which replaced the Council in 1967. This was largely because most Council members did not see themselves as representing any particular locality or island with an obligation to voice its grievances. In the early meetings of the Council the local members tacitly acknowledged the leadership of Eric Blacklock, a layman attached to the LMS and the only European to sit on the Council as an unofficial member. In a situation in which officials did not seem to recognise any need for political education, Blacklock helped to instruct many of his fellow members in parliamentary procedures and he constantly drew the Council's attention to events in other developing countries and to decolonisation policies being adopted by the United Nations. Liaison between official and unofficial members was also eased in the early stages by the appointment of Reuben Uatiao and Henry Naisali—respectively a Gilbertese and Ellice Islander—to serve on the official bench.

Because of the English-language requirement and the inclusion within the Council's membership of local civil servants, former civil servants and employees of the Island Councils, the level of political awareness in the Council was rather higher than it was in the community at large. The unofficial members of the Council, whether or not they were usually based on Tarawa, were brought into close contact with civil servants at a time when racial tension between Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders within the service was becoming increasingly evident. At the time, the Government was awarding overseas scholarships and places in the secondary school strictly on ability and achievement, a practice that led to more than one-third of the awards going to Ellice Islanders.¹⁰ Some Gilbertese felt that here, and in the employment and promotion of civil servants, European officials consistently and deliberately favoured Ellice Islanders.

Racial tension became more pronounced on Tarawa in 1964 and, early in 1965, a small group of Gilbertese, most of them senior civil servants, began meeting in private with a view to forming a political party committed to the defence of Gilbertese interests. At the June meeting of the Council one of the group, Tebau Tiba, initiated a

debate on racial differences in the Colony and cited examples of alleged favouritism in the civil service. In particular, he complained that Ellice Islanders adopted a superior attitude towards the Gilbertese and acted as if 'they owned the whole Colony'. The challenge went unanswered by the Ellice Islanders.¹¹

The strength of Gilbertese feeling was reflected in the formation of the Colony's first political party. The Gilbertese National Party was formed at a public meeting attended by more than 200 people at Bairiki, Tarawa, on 16 October 1965. The working committee, formed nearly a year before, now presented the meeting with a draft constitution and platform. The Party committed itself to the acceleration of political development, improvement of educational standards, abolition of school fees, promotion of Gilbertese unity, and the preservation of Gilbertese customs, culture and tradition.¹² Prominent among the Party's early members were Reuben Uatiao, later to be Chief Elected Member from 1967-70 and Leader of Government Business from 1971-74; Buren Ratieta, a senior civil servant; his brother, Naboua, also a civil servant who became the first Chief Minister in 1974; and Babera Kirata who, with the others, was elected to the House of Representatives. However once government employees were forced to choose between politics and a career in the public service in 1971 Babera chose the latter and rose to the position of Secretary for Commerce and Industries before he re-entered politics in 1977 and became Minister of Health and Community Affairs.

When the Advisory Council met a month after the formation of the Gilbertese National Party, the Government was still uncertain of the role that civil servants could or should play in politics and the use that political parties could make of government radio services. Because knowledge of the party-in-embryo had been kept to the trusted few, the Government was forced into a position in which its stance on these issues was seen only in terms of a reaction to, and its attitude towards, the Gilbertese National Party. Political broadcasts had been forbidden immediately after the formation of the Party because of allegations that Reuben Uatiao, a member of its working committee and an official member of the Advisory Council, was using his position as broadcasting officer to push the Party's propaganda. In a tentative statement the Government precluded the future use of its facilities by any 'racist' organisation but did concede that the Colony's circumstances might make desirable some relaxation of the usual prohibition on the participation of civil servants in politics.¹³

The formation of the Gilbertese National Party with seven of the ten members on its executive being civil servants, and the verbal attacks on Ellice Islanders in the Advisory Council and at public meetings provoked a quick reaction on Tarawa. Although the Party had some Roman Catholic members (including the Ratieta brothers) among its leaders, its popular following was largely Protestant because the concept of a racist party was condemned by the Catholic

hierarchy. In response to this situation a second party was formed. The constitution and policies of the Christian Democratic Party emphasised a non-racial and non-sectarian approach to politics and emphasised the need for Colony unity and, not surprisingly, drew its main support from part-Europeans, Ellice Islanders and Gilbertese Catholics. Again, its committee was largely made up of civil servants.¹⁴

In February 1966 many committee members for both parties were forced to resign when the Government prohibited all senior civil servants — those earning more than \$1000 a year and those exercising statutory or judicial powers, or employed in district administration—from holding office in, or working for, a political party. Moreover, before the next meeting of the Advisory Council in August 1966 both Reuben Uatiosa and Henry Naisali had been removed from its official membership and from that time until separation no local civil servant appeared on the official bench.

Despite declarations by both parties that one of their aims was to promote constitutional change, the Gilbertese National Party owed its origins to grievances within the civil service and it was as a reaction to this development that the Christian Democratic Party came into being. Attention was soon focussed on the constitutional issue in June 1966, however, when the Government brought to the Advisory Council proposals for the creation of a House of Representatives and a Governing Council. The constitutional issue had not previously caused any dissension. When the United Nations Special Committee on Colonialism had criticised the Colony's slow progress towards self-government, the unofficial members had been quite content to go along with the official view that it was a matter for Britain and the Colony to decide without outside interference.¹⁵ The members were soon divided, however, once there were specific proposals to discuss.

The Government suggested a House of Representatives to consist of the Resident Commissioner as president, the Assistant Resident Commissioner, six other official members and twenty-three elected members. The latter were to choose one of their number as Chief Elected Member and the representatives from each of four regions — northern, central and southern Gilberts and the Ellice Islands — would choose one from among themselves to serve with the Chief Elected Member as unofficial members of the Governing Council. This Council, to be composed of the Resident Commissioner, five official and five unofficial members, was to have both legislative and executive functions. As well as having control through the official majority the Resident could withhold his assent from any bill passed by the Governing Council. The House of Representatives was to advise the Governing Council on legislation and to act as a forum for the discussion of public affairs. English was to be the only language used in either chamber. Civil servants were to be free to serve as members of the House of Representatives but if elected to the

Governing Council would have to take unpaid leave.¹⁶

In drafting these proposals Andersen again took cognisance of the difficulties of communication in the Colony, the parlous state of its finances, the smallness of its civil service and the scarcity of western-educated Islanders. He considered a more orthodox type of Legislative Council to be unsuitable because the Government was not prepared to grant legislative power to elected members. This caused difficulties because the strength of island loyalties and inter-island rivalries made it desirable to give all islands their own representatives; yet any attempt to match the numbers of elected members with civil servants would have meant an unwieldy Council with a significant number of junior officials in its ranks. Andersen's intention was to protect the interests of individual islands in the House of Representatives and, he hoped, through regional representation in the Governing Council. It was an unusual constitution for a British dependency but, Andersen argued, it was the only workable compromise between the Colony's circumstances and the desire for future flexibility.¹⁷

In the Advisory Council Tebau Tiba, an employee of the Wholesale Society who was also President of the Gilbertese National Party, attacked the proposals because they were not, in his view, 'realistic, comprehensive or representative and were, therefore, totally unacceptable to the Unofficial Members of the Advisory Council'.¹⁸ In particular Tebau and his supporters were suspicious of the deviation from the Westminster model; they also criticised the absence of a timetable for the transference of responsibility and the insistence on the use of English in the House. They further maintained that tension between official and unofficial members of the Governing Council would be inevitable as the unofficial members would be in a minority but would be obliged to defend the decisions of the official-dominated Council in the House of Representatives. In a written submission to the Government, the Party urged the formation of standing committees of the House, an increase to twenty-nine members, a minimum of three meetings a year, the granting of the franchise to all eighteen-year-olds, the extension of the life of the House from two years to four, and asked for an assurance that full legislative responsibility would be conferred on the House after an initial four-year term.¹⁹

The two main spokesmen for the Christian Democratic Party in the Council, Temete Tebetaio, a retired civil servant who was the Party's president, and Simon Edwards, a local businessman of mixed descent, expressed only qualified support for the proposals because of the lack of constitutional protection for minority interests—a reference not only to the Ellice Islanders but also the part-European community on Betio where the Party had strong support.²⁰

At this stage both parties were virtually unknown outside of Tarawa, but Gilbertese members quickly allied themselves with one or other of the parties while the Ellice Islands representatives, Iosia

Taomia and Founuku Tipelu, both pastors, remained uncommitted but argued that change was premature. Thus they joined the Gilbertese National Party in opposition to the Government which was left, at best, with the lukewarm support of the Christian Democratic Party. Accepting the inevitable, the Government backed away from any attempt to obtain the Council's endorsement and immediately mounted a salvage operation. It was easy to do so because many members had argued that people away from Tarawa had not heard of the proposals and more time should be allowed for discussion and explanation. Others had asked for a Select Committee to consider the proposals in detail with a constitutional adviser. Officials had at first opposed these suggestions but then gave way once it became clear that the proposals would be rejected unless the wishes of the unofficial members were met.²¹ As adviser, the Government chose Sir Gawain Bell, a career colonial servant, who had just completed an assignment as constitutional consultant to the Federal Government of South Arabia and who, later in 1966, was appointed Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission.

Two representatives of the Committee toured all the Gilbert Islands and five of the Ellice Islands in August and September before it met with the adviser. In October, when the first discussions took place, the Committee brought forward a compromise list of subjects on which Bell's advice was sought. The points raised were closest to the criticisms made by the Gilbertese National Party but had the support of the Christian Democratic Party and, by this time, even Iosia Taomia had accepted that a constitutional change would and should take place. This all-party compromise had evolved in accordance with the customary emphasis on decision by consensus; the Select Committee had tried to form proposals which, even if not fully endorsed by any, could at least be tolerated by all its members. Moreover, because a majority of members favoured some form of advancement, the Committee felt that more progress would be made if it presented a united front to the adviser.

All unofficial members of the Committee were agreed in their criticism of seven features of the proposals; the absence of any indication as to the Colony's ultimate constitutional shape and political status; the lack of a timetable; the lack of legislative responsibility for the House of Representatives; the difficulties that could arise by the imposition of cabinet solidarity upon elected members of the Governing Council; the granting of legislative powers to such a small body as the Governing Council; the requirement that members would have to speak English; and the reservation of powers over external affairs and internal security to the High Commissioner rather than to the Resident Commissioner. To these, Iosia Taomia added a request that Ellice Islands representation be increased.

By the time Bell arrived the Government had already prepared a list of concessions — the vernacular languages were to be permitted in the House of Representatives, a time limit would be placed upon its

lifetime, and members of the Governing Council would be permitted to justify or explain their actions in the House so long as security and the public interest were protected — but did not convey these to the Committee. In his preliminary discussions with the Government, Bell agreed with the amended proposals and thereafter his role was essentially that of persuader rather than adviser. The Committee accepted his assurances that it was too early to determine the future path to decolonisation, that it was unlikely that the High Commissioner would ever invoke his reserve powers, and that he (Bell) believed the proposed constitution to be admirably suited to the Colony's circumstances and needs. On Bell's advice the Committee also rejected the Ellice Islanders' case for special representation and it was agreed that there would be four members from the Ellice Islands and that, except for Tarawa, no Gilbert Island should have more than two representatives. When the Select Committee reported back to the Advisory Council at the end of October, the amended proposals were accepted after brief discussion with the only subsequent change of consequence being the inclusion of a 'Bill of Rights' as an additional protection for minority groups.²²

The 1967 constitution made two important concessions to the realities of the Colony situation: first, legislative power was vested in the small Governing Council so as to allow wide geographical representation in the lower House; second, civil servants were permitted to serve in the House but not in the Governing Council without taking leave of absence (except when the House was actually in session) or resigning. The constitution was described by the Government as a significant step forward and one that would allow elected representatives to play a significant role in the formation of policy. Initially the elected members supported this view. They attended the early meetings of the House with optimism. But, faced with a wide range of problems, their frustration steadily increased and, by the time the constitution was amended in 1970, there was widespread disillusionment with the political process among members and their constituents.

From the outset there were difficulties because few members had previous parliamentary experience. Although ten persons who had been unofficial members of the Advisory Council stood for election, only three — Kaitara Metai (Nonouti), Founuku Tipelu (Northern Ellice) and Iosia Taomia (Southern Ellice)—were returned, together with Reuben Uatioa who had served as an official. Ex-officio and appointed members were similarly inexperienced and there was little improvement with time because of the constantly changing official membership. The situation was worsened by the rules of procedure, based on a standard British model with few concessions to indigenous methods of decision-making which emphasised free discussion and consensus.

For the elected members, the emphasis on English caused even more problems. It had been agreed during the constitutional discussions

that English would be used for legislation and as the language of record, but that members could use the Gilbertese and Ellice languages if they wished and that equipment would be purchased to allow simultaneous translation. Because there was a shortage of good interpreters and the equipment was considered too costly, the Government decided that interpreters would be seated between pairs of non-English-speaking members to provide a summary translation. By this unilateral decision the Government effectively eliminated more than half the elected members from meaningful participation. While only eight of the twenty-three elected members used interpreters constantly, there were a mere handful among the others whose English was adequate for them to understand fully draft legislation, reports and policy papers. The Government did provide occasional information papers, but only in English; not even summaries of legislation or crucial documents like the Colony's first development plan were provided in the local languages. Not surprisingly, on the few occasions on which leading members chose to deliver an oration in Gilbertese on some key issue and then to follow this with a more measured presentation in English, there was considerable consternation on the official bench. The language problem was raised during the second meeting of the House. Tetezano Aram (Arorae) led other members in criticising the interpreting facilities, complained that many members could not follow the proceedings and felt they could neither contribute to them nor explain decisions and policies to their constituents. The Government's response typified its approach to the various problems faced by elected members. The Assistant Resident Commissioner sympathised with the members, and agreed that more interpreters might be needed, but despite constant complaints the gulf between official and elected members remained and neither he nor his colleagues made any realistic attempt to ease difficulties of this nature.²³

During the first four meetings of the House formal sessions were held in the mornings and in the afternoons officials led informal discussions on various matters to come before the House. After Andersen's departure from the Colony in June 1969, however, no further meetings were organised. The Government retrospectively justified this change on the grounds that few members had shown interest,²⁴ but in reality the convenience of officials burdened with major responsibilities in addition to their attendance at meetings of the House was rather more significant. That the members did have a keen interest in such meetings was again shown in December 1970 when, in response to the number of questions coming forward on the progress of the 1970-72 Development Plan, two officials organised an informal meeting, with the Chief Elected Member in the chair, to discuss progress and problems. The elected members showed up in force, asked many questions, followed points through until they were satisfied and suggested some revision of priorities. The officials pointed out that their suggestions should have been made the day

before when the House had discussed the 1971 Estimates and had approved \$1 250 000 worth of capital expenditure, with only a solitary query, in less than two minutes.²⁵ The lesson went home, but too late, because only a minority of the members were returned to the Legislative Council in the following year.

Throughout the lifetime of the House the elected members seemed not to be aware, or were not made aware, that both the budget debate and the Address in Reply to the Resident Commissioner's speech offered an opportunity to discuss any aspect of Government policy or to bring to official notice any grievances or problems that their constituents might have. Instead they tried to make these points through questions and were thus restricted to a few sentences and denied themselves the chance to explain a problem in detail. In accordance with local perceptions of the Government as a mother bountiful, questions were mostly confined to parochial issues like the posting of teachers to island schools, the construction of school buildings, the availability of medicines on outer islands, and the conditions for deck passengers on local ships. The low price for copra paid to producers was a constant source of complaint but it was not until December 1970 that a Member actually moved that the Government should consider ways of abolishing the export duty.²⁶ With so many questions implying inefficiency in various branches of Government, officials generally took a defensive attitude towards questioners, gave the minimum possible information often in a deliberately complex fashion, and made little attempt to seek and remedy the most common causes of grievance.

Potentially controversial issues were similarly treated. The favoured treatment given to Tarawa in the distribution of Colonial Development and Welfare funds, for example, was a constant cause of dissatisfaction on the outer islands. It was an issue on which the Government was extremely sensitive as was shown in December 1968 when Sione Tui Kleiss (Northern Ellice) asked how much aid the four islands of his constituency had received from Colonial Development and Welfare funds, and the amounts of government assistance that each had received since the islands were incorporated into the Colony. He was told by the Financial Secretary that detailed accounting records dating back seventy years were not available and 'even if it were, officers could not be spared to undertake the necessary research'.²⁷ Yet the information required to answer the first part of the question was readily available in the Accountant General's records and officials knew when the answer was given that these showed that between 1948 and 1968 the only funds specifically allocated to the northern Ellice Islands was \$800 for a sea-wall at Nanumea, a project that was found to be impracticable, and abandoned.²⁸

The elected members generally showed little interest in legislation. The only occasion on which draft legislation already submitted to the House was amended to meet with their approval was after the first meeting in December 1969 when a majority strongly criticised a draft

Marriage Ordinance would have allowed second cousins to marry contrary to customary definitions of incest.²⁹ Legislation was more often regarded as a 'Government' matter of little relevance to members — an impression confirmed when members had to ponder on a draft Genocide Ordinance and other measures introduced because of Britain's treaty obligations. Generally, legislation was not criticised until it had been enacted and its effects became evident. The Liquor Ordinance of 1969, for example, abolished the licence system for the right to buy or consume spirits (beer had not been subject to licence since 1962) but re-introduced it for sour toddy. Legislation had followed the recommendations of a Select Committee and was approved by the House with only slight opposition. But when it became clear that 'sour toddy' included coconut sap fermented to the point where it could be used as yeast in bread-making, and the Protestant-dominated Island Councils of the southern Gilberts had decided they would issue no licences (in part a decision aimed at Roman Catholic minorities), demands for liberalisation were made, and carried, in December 1969 but the recommendation was not implemented until August 1971.³⁰

The delays in implementing recommendations of the House compared with the speed with which official business was processed intensified the dissatisfaction felt by elected members and the disillusionment of electors with their representatives. In December 1970 the issue was publicised in a heated adjournment debate in which Babera Kirata (Onotoa), one of the more articulate members, attacked the Government for the low priority it gave to elected members' motions and suggestions. He cited the delays over amending the Liquor Ordinance compared with the speed with which the Government had repealed the Stamp Duty (Cheques) Ordinance which had been enacted in May 1970 when the establishment of a trading bank was imminent. The Ordinance, on which the bank had not been consulted, was found to be unworkable and repealed at the next meeting of the House. Framed within a general consideration of communication between officials and elected members, Babera's attack on the Government struck a chord with his colleagues who shared his belief that they had lost the confidence of their constituents who regarded them, as they regarded themselves, as 'useless' and 'as nothing more than Government rubber-stamps'.³¹

The elected members of the Governing Council faced even more difficulties, the most important being the lack of expertise and information available to them as a basis for criticising and analysing Government policies. Generally they were not given access to files, but only to papers prepared specifically for the Council. Hence they were not made aware of all the issues involved and thus lacked the confidence, as well as the knowledge, to either make constructive suggestions or to propose their own alternative policies. Confrontations were rare in the Council and when elected members seemed united in their opposition the Government preferred to

withdraw or modify proposals rather than force them to a vote. In fact, no Resident Commissioner was obliged to use his casting vote in the Council because the elected members always knew they could be defeated and saw opposition as a futile exercise.

For the three years of the existence of the House, the Chief Elected Member was Reuben Uatiao, a member for Urban Tarawa who had resigned from his position as broadcasting officer when elected in 1967. Reuben was born at Onotoa in 1924 but adopted to Nonouti shortly afterwards. After attending the LMS school at Beru he became a radio operator in 1940 and then spent a decade in Fiji. Returning to the Colony in 1950, he soon obtained a reputation as a trouble-maker because of his involvement in industrial disputes. Because of his overseas experience he was quick to condemn the racist paternalism of Europeans, especially officials, and he was embittered by their apparent favouritism of Ellice Islanders in the civil service. As one of the more senior Gilbertese civil servants he was an obvious candidate for appointment to the Colony Conference and the Advisory Council and he was frequently sent as the Colony's representative to such regional bodies as the South Pacific Conference where he learned much about politics and party organisation from other delegates. As a founding member of the Gilbertese National Party he was a natural choice for the position of Chief Elected Member but as a matter of deliberate policy he then dampened down the Party's activities and made a conscious effort to represent all factions. At one level he succeeded: Ellice Islanders respected his industry and his ability to speak their language and although a Protestant he was not as anti-Catholic as some; but some political opponents remained constantly suspicious because of the racist and religious overtones of his activities in the 1960s. In fact, once the transference of responsibility began, Reuben became less of an anti-colonialist than he had been before, not simply because he was involved in the process, and understood it better, but because he recognised the dangers inherent in the politics of extremism and became more moderate, a public nation-builder for the Colony while remaining privately committed to the Gilbertese cause.

The constitutional arrangement of 1967 was an experiment, a success in some aspects, a failure in others. It certainly convinced elected members that they needed to be directly involved in policy formation and the business of government if constitutional change was to have any meaning. It also convinced many, within and outside the House, that parliamentary bodies were yet another European device to be left to those who understood them. Some of the disappointments and frustrations were inevitable, and are common enough in dependencies, but many were created or exacerbated by officials who themselves lacked any real understanding of decolonisation or any commitment to it; for some of them, the House of Representatives and the repetitive questions of members were simply a time-consuming irritant to be tolerated between the more

important tasks of administration.

A few months after the introduction of the 1967 constitution the elected members of the House of Representatives were again asking when the next stage of constitutional development could be expected and what form it would take. There was, however, no evidence of widespread interest in the issue; rather, an assumption that sooner or later the Colony would be granted self-government, and curiosity as to the actual form. For its part, the United Kingdom Government had a generalised commitment to decolonisation but was not sufficiently anxious at this stage to hasten the process or to put pressure on the Colony's politicians. It was Andersen who called for discussions on a new constitution in May 1969, a month before he was due to retire. While Andersen could not remain to see the outcome of his initiative, he did achieve his primary aim which was to commit his successor to the granting of increased responsibility to elected representatives. In these informal discussions members agreed to extend the life of the House by a year while negotiations proceeded, to appoint a Select Committee to bring down recommendations on a new constitution and to consider the possibility of a new name for the Colony—one that could more easily embrace the Phoenix and Line groups and Ocean Island and, hopefully, help to establish some degree of national identity. While members were quite content to go along with these proposals, all of which were subsequently confirmed by the House, they were reluctant to come forward with positive suggestions, preferring to leave these to the Select Committee. There was a decided preference for the transference of legislative responsibility to the lower House, so that members might feel more involved, but otherwise the members concentrated on airing their discontent with the existing arrangements.³²

The Assistant Resident Commissioner was appointed chairman of the Select Committee with the Attorney-General, Reuben Uatiao, Iosia Taomia, Naboua Ratieta (Marakei), Tito Teburoro (Tabiteuea) and Ioteba Uriam (Tamana) as members. As a departure from previous practice the officials did not place firm proposals before the Committee; rather, they let ideas for a new constitution evolve in the course of discussion and in the light of the impressions gained by unofficial members at their meetings on the outer islands. The Committee quickly rejected the governing council and committee system then being planned for the Solomon Islands on the grounds that it would prove costly, it would not be desirable for all representatives to remain on Tarawa to attend constant committee meetings, and because the poor shipping service would make it difficult for members to visit their constituencies regularly. Instead, the Committee concentrated on proposals that would lead eventually to a ministerial form of government.

In a preliminary report drafted in September 1969 the Committee recommended that the House of Representatives should be replaced

by a Legislative Council although, unlike Legislative Councils elsewhere, theirs was to have an unofficial majority and full legislative responsibility. The number of elected members would remain at twenty-three despite requests from the Ellice Islands that all inhabited islands should be given their own representatives. Elections were to be held every three years. The elected members of the Legislative Council were to choose from among themselves a Chief Elected Member, three regional representatives—one each from the northern and central Gilberts, and the Ellice Islands—and two others to serve on the Executive Council which would also have an elected majority. The Committee accepted that the United Kingdom Government would not approve full ministerial government and so decided to recommend that a 'Member' system be adopted under which the Resident Commissioner in consultation with the Chief Elected Member would make each member of the Executive Council spokesman for some aspect of government activity. The Assistant Resident Commissioner, the Attorney-General and the Financial Secretary were to be members of both Councils together with two other persons, not necessarily from the public service, appointed by the Resident Commissioner in consultation with the Chief Elected Member.

The suggestion that the name of the Colony be changed met with little enthusiasm. Both Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders seemed to regard any change as a commitment to a future that was by no means clear. Some thought that a change might hinder the division of the Colony if either race wished to go it alone. On more than one occasion, however, those who were untroubled by such considerations suggested *Tungavalu*—from *Tungaru* and *Tuvalu*, names sometimes used in former times to describe the Gilbert and Ellice groups respectively.³³

The Committee wanted to seek outside advice on three main issues: whether the member system should be established by constitutional order or by convention; whether reserve powers should be vested in the Resident Commissioner or in a locally domiciled Governor, or in the Secretary of State (a question that raised the possibility of separation from the Western Pacific High Commission); and whether civil servants could take leave of absence in the event of their election, or whether they would have to resign. The elected members on the Committee made clear that they wished to consult an independent adviser in no way connected with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It was their intention to approach Professor J.W. Davidson of the Australian National University who had been an adviser in Western Samoa, the Cook Islands and Nauru and was then assisting the Congress of Micronesia; Davidson had been known to some members of the Committee since the 1960s when he had travelled via the Colony to Nauru.

In January 1970, however, the Committee modified several of its initial recommendations after meetings with Miss E.J. Emery, Head of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Department of the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office, and with the new Resident Commissioner, Sir John Field, a senior colonial official who had served in Africa, St Helena and Montserrat. Field was determined to return the Colony to the orthodoxy of the Westminster model because of his conviction that the past and proposed constitutions would not lead anywhere in an orderly fashion. In the light of Field's high status in local eyes — status bestowed by virtue of his age, his seniority and his knighthood — and his quiet persuasive manner, the Committee abandoned the idea of an independent adviser and accepted, almost without question, Field's 'suggestions as to ways by which the Committee's provisional proposals . . . might fit into a more conventional style of constitution which had been found workable elsewhere in countries at a similar stage of political advancement.'³⁴

There was now to be an official majority on the Executive Council to which four other elected members of the Legislative Council would be appointed by the Resident Commissioner after consultation with the Leader of Government Business. The latter, successor to the Chief Elected Member, was to be chosen by the elected members of Legislative Council. After the first elections held under the new constitution any civil servant entering the Legislative Council would have to resign but would keep pension entitlements earned to that time. A further recommendation that at subsequent elections pension rights would be forfeited was subsequently dropped. As well as the usual reserve powers there were to be additional provisions to ensure adherence to any conditions attached to aid grants.³⁵ The Select Committee was thus persuaded to give away the elected majority on the Executive Council which had been one of its earliest and strongest recommendations. With it went the right of the elected members to determine who from among them should serve on Executive Council. The additional reserve powers over aid funds were unusual, given the fact that all aid funds were allocated for specific projects and paid in stages, and the convention that only the Government, here protected by its reserve powers and official majority in the Executive Council, could introduce measures involving financial appropriations.

The report of the Select Committee was tabled in March 1970 when the House of Representatives agreed upon endorsement but then deferred further debate until the Report had been widely circulated and discussed. There was little discussion of the constitutional issues but one Ellice member, Sione Tui Kleiss, revived dormant racial rivalries when he claimed that under such a constitution the Ellice people would be suppressed by the more numerous Gilbertese.³⁶ Sione was not alone. The prospect of further constitutional change again brought home to the Ellice people their minority status, and discontent that had been smouldering since the formation of the Gilbertese National Party now flared into the open with some Ellice Islanders demanding 'separation before self-government' — interestingly enough they never saw it as secession — in the belief that their interests could only be protected by Britain or by separate status.

After the March meeting of the House of Representatives Sione Tui Kleiss, Founuku Tipelu and Melitiana Kaisami (all the Ellice members excepting Iosia Taomia who had been a member of the Select Committee), toured the Ellice group explaining the recommendations. In May, when the Report was debated by the House, sharp divisions among the Ellice members were revealed. On the one hand Melitiana and Founuku accused Sione of urging the people to reject proposals that had been endorsed by elected members and to which all should have been loyal. Sione, on the other hand, accused his colleagues of saying to the Islanders, 'I beg you, the Resident Commissioner wants you to accept this' and added that 'Any remark by the Resident Commissioner is a directive to the Ellice people, and therefore they accepted it.'³⁷ The allegations by both sides were near the truth. Sione had made his opposition to the proposals clear in March and he rejected the idea that he was bound by a decision of the House with which he disagreed; and, it would seem, the Resident Commissioner had impressed his endorsement of the constitution upon two of the other members. Field's remarks, however they were reported in the Ellice group, were important in persuading the Islanders 'for now'; most still reserved the right to separate in the future.

In response to the resulting tensions, however, it was agreed that each of the Ellice Islands would have a representative in the Legislative Council and, as an extension of the principle that all islands should return a member, Kuria and Aranuka which had been joined in the past would also become separate constituencies. The increased representation for the Ellice Islands was a belated attempt to defuse the racial issue. While having some immediate effect, it solved nothing in the longer term; from this time onwards the possibility of separation and the nature of future constitutional development replaced the uncertainty of the financial future as the Colony's most pressing problem.

Elections under the new constitution were held in March 1971. Of the thirteen members of the House of Representatives who were nominated, only five were successful; of the two who had sat on the Governing Council only Reuben Uatioa, subsequently elected Leader of Government Business, was returned; Sione Tui Kleiss was the sole Ellice Islander to be re-elected, a number of his colleagues having been disqualified by a decision of the Ellice Islands Church that pastors should not take an active part in politics. Most of the former members who sought re-election were heavily defeated at the polls, some receiving only 10 per cent of the votes.³⁸ What the new members lacked in experience, however, they made up in education and administrative experience. As well as a number of civil servants among the new members, there were four presidents of Island Councils. The first woman to be successful in a Colony election was Mrs Tekarei Russell who had become well known through her work with women's clubs and was returned with Reuben Uatioa from the two-member

urban constituency. The election of a strong English-speaking delegation from the Ellice Islands was a clear indication of the anxiety felt for the future by the people of the group and their desire to be well represented in any future constitutional negotiations.

At the first meeting of the Legislative Council in April 1971, the members chose Reuben Uatiosa as the Leader of Government Business; the Resident Commissioner appointed Naboua Ratieta (Marakei), Bwebwetake Areieta (Maiana) and Isakala Paeniu (Nukulaelae), all former civil servants, and Otiuea Tanentoa (Beru), a former LMS teacher, to the Executive Council. All soon learned to handle the criticisms and questions of their fellow-members but it was inevitable that they came to be regarded as part of 'the Government', and therefore partly responsible for its policies, impositions and inefficiencies; most elected members saw themselves as watchdogs and, almost by definition, as critics of Government. Yet the standard of debate was much higher, private members attempted to influence the formation of policy through motions, and were brought more into the business of government through informal meetings with officials and, more formally, through a series of select committees on such fundamental issues as the localisation of the civil service, the decentralisation of government activity and constitutional change. The elected members of the Executive Council, with their responsibilities for Communications and Works, Social Services, Natural Resources and Internal Affairs were able to exercise some influence but more often found it difficult to make headway when faced with senior expatriate officials who could not bring themselves to relinquish control of their departments. Yet elected members of both Councils found the new constitution a sufficient improvement on the old so that when a further revision was considered there was a consensus in favour of retaining the existing structure but with the transference of increased responsibility to elected representatives. There was no desire for haste, however, and when a Select Committee was proposed in December 1971 the suggestion met with little enthusiasm.³⁹ When Reuben Uatiosa, as Leader of Government Business, proposed such a committee a year later, however, the situation had changed in two respects: firstly, the Colony had been separated finally from the Western Pacific High Commission and the Resident Commissioner, henceforth given the status of Governor, dealt directly with London on all matters; secondly, the issue of the future division of the Colony had reached the point where it could no longer be ignored.⁴⁰ In response to Ellice Islanders' demands for separation, Anthony Kershaw, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, visited the Colony in October 1972 and the United Kingdom Government subsequently appointed a special Commissioner to investigate the issue. And while the United Kingdom Government did not want to thrust the Colony into independence, it was not prepared to accept unnecessary delay and the Secretary of State specifically asked the Legislative Council —

somewhat unrealistically under the circumstances — to allow the Commissioner's enquiry and the planning of a new constitution to proceed side by side without each being prejudiced by the other.⁴¹ Some determination of the future status of the Ellice Islands had been made the more pressing by the devastation of Funafuti by Hurricane Bebe in October 1972, and the need to rebuild according to future requirements.

For the meantime, however, a Select Committee to examine the constitution was appointed in December 1972⁴² and brought its recommendations to the Legislative Council in June 1973⁴³ although these were publicised before the report was debated in detail and approved in December 1973.⁴⁴ Throughout these proceedings the Government tried to hasten the constitutional discussions while most Ellice Islands members sought a deferment of the constitutional revision until the separation issue had been decided. They and, indeed, most Gilbertese members, treated the constitutional proposals as though they applied only to the Gilbert Islands and were further convinced of the wisdom of this approach when the United Kingdom announced terms under which the Ellice Islanders would be permitted to secede.⁴⁵ Most Colony politicians, if not the United Kingdom Government, treated the outcome of the proposed referendum as a foregone conclusion despite the harshness of the conditions. The protests of the Ellice Islanders notwithstanding, the constitutional revision went through for implementation in 1974.

The main change was the introduction of a full ministerial system and the replacement of the Legislative and Executive Councils by a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers. The elected members of the Legislative Assembly were to choose a Chief Minister who, in turn, would appoint and allocate portfolios to between four and six Ministers who would be joined in the Council of Ministers by the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney-General. These three, who would be the only officials to sit in either body, and the Governor, were to handle the reserve powers of external affairs, defence, internal security, the public service and justice. Finance, too, was something of a reserved subject in so far as the Financial Secretary did not give way to a Minister until self-government was expected at the end of 1976. There was thus an elected majority in both Legislative Assembly and the Council of Ministers and, at the same time, the principle of collective responsibility was imposed upon Ministers. In the absence of a party system, no provision was made for an official opposition. The Governor was to preside over both bodies. The overall elected membership of the Assembly was kept at twenty-eight, but there was a slight change in that Abaiang dropped from two members to one, and an extra member given to South Tarawa which was divided into a single-member constituency of Betio with Ocean Island, and a two-member constituency for the area covered by the Te Inainano Urban Council. The term of the Assembly was extended from three years to

four, and the suffrage qualification dropped from 21 years to 18.⁴⁶

The first election under these conditions was held on 4 April 1974. As in previous elections the voter turn-out was low with only about 60 per cent of those eligible bothering to register, and only 70 per cent of those registered bothering to vote. Also in accordance with past trends, there was a high casualty rate among sitting members with fourteen of those who sought re-election losing their seats.⁴⁷ Most prominent among these was Reuben Uatiao who for the previous five years had been the country's only nationally-known leader. In this case he suffered not only from the ill-health that had restricted his activities; but from his persistence in standing for the Te Inainano seat on South Tarawa where he had little family support, where his opponents successfully put aside the usual Gilbertese reluctance to thrust themselves forward and ran a vigorous campaign, and where 'The Government' is always unpopular with those who work for it, or would like to, and with those whose lands have been taken for public use. The situation was affected also by a nine-day strike in February by the powerful labourers' union.⁴⁸ South Tarawa had virtually ground to a halt, and essential services had been threatened. Here Reuben lost out both ways — with the strikers and their sympathisers who were seeking the dismissal of a supervisor, an Ellice Islander known to be a close friend of his; and from many of those affected by the strike who wanted the Government to take stronger action. The two successful candidates in the constituency were Mrs Tekarei Russell, a sitting member, and Abete Merang, the union organiser.

With Reuben's defeat, Naboua Ratieta, who had been a member of the Executive Council from 1971-3, was elected as Chief Minister with his strongest support coming from the survivors from the old Legislative Council. Naboua appointed a full complement of six ministers and, so fierce was the competition for the places among his faction, the Chief Minister was not able to bring into the ministry the leaders of any of the clusters of members who made up the opposition. Under these circumstances the Ellice Islanders might have held a winning hand but they, too, were divided. Two of their number were given ministerial portfolios — Isakala Paeniu, who had been a hard-working Minister of Natural Resources in the previous government and who was known as a vehement opponent of separation; and Sione Tui Kleiss who had assumed some leadership among Ellice Islands politicians since Iosia Taomia had left politics, and had stood against Reuben Uatiao for Leader of Government Business in 1971. A firm believer in separation, Sione was encouraged to believe that by accepting a place in the ministry he would boost his own chances of heading an Ellice Islands government after separation. This arrangement left in the opposition some of the most able members including two young Gilbertese graduates — Roniti Teiwaki who had also been an unsuccessful contender for the position of Chief Minister but later joined the Government and became Minister for Education, Training and Culture and, subsequently, the Gilberts Islands' first

Minister of Finance; and Ieremia Tabai who became Chief Minister after the general election of 1977 and then, at independence, the first President of Kiribati at age 29. Also in opposition was Toaripi Lauti, the leader of the other Ellice Islands members, who had been elected unopposed from Funafuti after he had given up a well-paid position on Nauru at the request of his fellow-Islanders. With separation in 1975 he became the first Chief Minister of Tuvalu.

Faced with such an able opposition the new ministry maintained its majority only with difficulty and with the support of the three official members. Outside the Legislative Assembly it steadily lost support. It was not simply that the Ministers inherited the mantle of dissatisfaction that had always been directed at the Colony Government, but that the Ministers, in their anxiety to show that they had taken over the powers of the often aloof expatriate officials, began to behave rather like them. Some were criticised for seeming to relish the exercise of power, for their salaries, their official houses, their lifestyle, and for their expectation and ready acceptance of the preferential treatment that had customarily been reserved for distinguished visitors from overseas. From 1976 onwards, an even more important source of discontent was a proposed Defence Force, publicised as a unit that could fulfil ceremonial duties, provide a band on state occasions, and serve as a skilled construction team for outer island projects; it was also, but less obviously, intended to be a strike-breaking force that could defend and maintain essential services.⁴⁹ Even though it hardly got beyond the planning stage before the defeat of the Government in 1977, it was clearly a project that was going to demand a heavy flow of scarce internal resources because Britain would not cover it with aid. It was this diversion of resources to a purpose that was approved by few and criticised by most — as an unnecessary luxury, or sinister, depending on the point of view — that caused most opposition.

The planned Defence Force, combined with the élitist attitudes of some members of the Council of Ministers, had the effect of heightening discontent with the Government, especially on Tarawa, and made a future shift of emphasis inevitable. But the Defence Force, however intense the feelings it generated at the time, and the importance that it assumes in retrospect, was still only a relatively minor affair. From the time of Kershaw's visit in 1972, through the referendum of 1974 and its culmination in October 1975, the movement for 'separation' — the secession of the Ellice Islands — remained firmly at centre stage. The United Kingdom Government led the Colony slowly, but firmly, towards self-government in the 1960s and early 1970s but, despite all the experiments and concessions, the boundaries that had been imposed for colonial convenience did not survive the process.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The parting of the ways

It was inevitable, given the way in which colonial boundaries were drawn in the 19th century, that the territorial integrity of dependencies would not always survive into statehood. Only rarely were colonies endowed with a cultural unity, a common language, or a sense of identity. In Africa and the Caribbean, subject peoples were first united by their colonial experience and the anti-colonial sentiment that evolved from it. But once the perceived oppressor was gone, sub-national loyalties came to the fore; if anti-colonial nationalism was the hallmark of the 1950s and early 1960s, the past decade has seen a resurgence of sub-national identity and tribalism that has threatened the unity of some states and led to the oppression of minorities in many more.

The partition of a country as vast and as divided as India was regretted but accepted as inevitable at the time. Thereafter, and here the United Nations played an important role, any threat to the 'integrity of territoriality' was regarded with almost universal disfavour. There were fears of precedents being established, of discontented minorities spawning a myriad of micro-states, of regions rich in natural resources trying to shrug off their pensioner neighbours. With the aid of India, Bangladesh was able to free itself from Pakistan's control in 1971; it won international acceptance because victory was so rapid, and sympathy because of the grinding poverty of its people. Thus secession was made a reality but elsewhere — in the cases of Katanga in Zaire, Biafra in Nigeria, and Eritrea in Ethiopia, for example — nations of all political persuasions turned their backs on minority demands. In Oceania, archipelagos sharing a common culture were readily recognised by the powers in the 19th century, but the histories of New Guinea, Micronesia, Samoa and the New Hebrides as well as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony exemplify the way in which colonial convenience and international politics were often more important than local considerations in determining the shape of overseas empires.

Ellice Islanders' demands for separation from the Gilbertese were not articulated until the mid-1960s.¹ Before that time colonial rule was a way of life, British authority was accepted by both races, and self-government no more than a possibility in the remote future. The issue of racial differences and rivalries had been brought to the surface by discontented Gilbertese civil servants in the early 1960s, yet the growth of secessionist sentiment among Ellice Islanders coincided with the

decline of Gilbertese agitation, and an apparent Gilbertese acceptance of the status quo. The answer to this paradox lay in the 1967 constitution. Until its introduction both Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders had been politically unaware, even naive, and not having been given any clear sign as to the future stages of constitutional change were unsure as to where power would lie. But the negotiations that preceded the creation of the House of Representatives made it abundantly clear to both Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders that the Gilbertese majority would prevail, and that even a simple insistence on a distribution of education and employment opportunities in accordance with the numbers of each race would lead to a worsening of the relatively privileged position then enjoyed by the Ellice Islanders. However, the strength of feeling that had lain behind the rivalries of the preceding decade had already convinced a sufficient number of Ellice Islanders that they could not expect even this proportional justice and that they would be the victims of discrimination, perhaps oppression. Wider issues were also involved. The tensions and the racial mixing that had followed from the relaxation of controls on inter-island migration, together with the growth of employment, had also served to highlight the fact that there *were* two races in the Colony, that they were in competition for employment, and that one outnumbered the other sevenfold.

Neither the Ellice Islanders nor the Gilbertese ever spoke of secession, it was always 'separation'. For the most part this reflected no more than the low incidence of literacy in English and a degree of political innocence, but the term 'separation' was also a more accurate reflection of the Ellice Islanders' perceptions of what their demands were all about. They did not envisage a violent partition, nor being cut off with only the proverbial shilling, but a considered and *reasonable* division of islands and ocean and a share of the reserve funds, fleet and other assets including at least some of the Phoenix and Line Islands. It is also the case that the British Government encouraged the use of 'separation' ahead of 'secession' because this term would generate less international criticism if partition became unavoidable.

Although the separation movement found its first overt expression in the 1960s, the foundations were laid long before. This was most obviously so in the decision to combine the two Protectorates at first informally under Swayne's jurisdiction, and then formally with annexation in 1916. It was also significant that for fifty years the Government did nothing to foster a sense of unity and, in fact, discouraged the mobility which might have generated a deeper understanding of each race by the other. And, at least from the Ellice Islanders' point of view, there were a series of grievances that had aroused discontent in the past and were now revived to justify the case for separation. The generalised belief that government expenditure was concentrated on Tarawa and that outer islands were starved of funds was valid enough, even if the problem was unavoidable, but here the Ellice Islanders were in exactly the same situation as those

who lived on the outer Gilbert Islands. There were other, more specific, grievances that went back to the early years of colonial rule. The first was over the Island Funds, begun by Swayne in 1893, which were absorbed into the central government coffers in 1914. While the Gilbertese governments handed over their funds readily enough, the Ellice Islanders held out, and then agreed with the transfer only on condition that the Government undertake a special project in their islands each year. The Government paid no heed to the undertaking, though it did draw on the balance of the funds to provide drought relief in the southern Gilberts from time to time. The Ellice Islanders, apparently advised by their District Officer, George Smith-Rewse, and certainly encouraged by their LMS pastors, established overseas investment accounts into which savings, wartime compensation payments and levies on overseas workers were regularly paid. By the time separation became an issue, the combined island and church funds exceeded \$250 000 and helped to foster the notion that an independent Ellice Islands could be self-supporting. It was also believed that the level of services was so low that it could not be worse with separation. People asked why it was that there were so many Ellice Islands doctors and yet often only one doctor stationed in the group. There were complaints about the delivery of stores and building materials, the infrequency and inefficiency of the shipping service, and the breaking of the specific undertaking that when the RCS *Matapula* was bought from the Wholesale Society in 1955 she would be based permanently in the Ellice group.

While important in themselves, all these issues become relatively insignificant when they are put alongside the pattern of educational development in any consideration of the underlying causes of separation. It was not just that when the Ellice Islands School was established in 1924 the Government agreed to take over the costs after three years and to keep a European schoolmaster in charge, and then backed out of the agreement after four years; nor that in the 1950s the Government agreed to build the girls' high school at Funafuti, and then changed its decision in favour of Tarawa; nor that the Ellice consistently resented sending their best pupils, both boys and girls, to high school in a Gilbertese environment. Rather, it was the positive way in which development had been shaped by the Ellice Islanders' enthusiasm for literacy and western education that was most important. This attitude had been manifest even before the arrival of the first missionaries, and had been built on by Donald Kennedy in the Ellice Islands School in the 1920s and 1930s. At a time when it was unfashionable, even unpopular, in colonial circles, Kennedy placed a very strong emphasis on academic education and on the teaching of English as well as covering the vernacular literacy, basic arithmetic, agriculture, hygiene and manual skills that were then the common core of most government educational programmes in Pacific dependencies. Kennedy was a stern and sometimes brutal taskmaster, respected in the way in which Ellice Islanders have always respected

authority figures and, for the most part, forgiven for his lapses. When Kennedy left the school in 1931 his best graduates took it over while Kennedy, who then became District Officer for the group, continued to guide its progress. By the mid-1930s the school was essentially self-sufficient, competent to manage its own affairs and, with only local teachers, producing results at least as good as the King George V School on Tarawa.

In February 1942 most Europeans were withdrawn from the Gilbert Islands in anticipation of Japanese occupation. Although the King George V School was kept going for a while by its local teachers, the Japanese closed it down in September. A few schools stayed open in the outer islands but in time these were either closed or were gradually abandoned by pupils and teachers alike. It was very different in the Ellice Islands. There were no Japanese forces to close the schools and there was only a break of a little more than a year before American forces occupied the islands and administration was restored. Even so, officials had little time for educational matters but the Ellice Islanders kept both the Ellice Islands School and their village schools operating on the same scale as before the war. The essential difference between the two groups was more than that of one being a war theatre, the other not; it was a matter of attitude. Education in the Gilberts had often been seen as part of the imposition of government; as Bingham had found in the 1860s, there was little enthusiasm for education in the vernacular and opportunities for education in English had been limited in the extreme. In the Ellice Islands, education was seen as one of the new opportunities for advancement offered by contact with the West, as something to be pursued because of the mystique of literacy itself, because education and especially the ability to speak English would bring rewards and esteem, not ridicule. When, in later years, Gilbertese argued that their people were disadvantaged in the civil service because of the wartime closure of the King George V School, Ellice Islanders were quick to reply that the Gilbertese had allowed their village schools to close while those in the Ellice Islands had been kept open.

In the immediate post-war years, however, it was the Ellice Islands School that made the decisive difference between the two groups. As an interim measure until a high school could be re-established, nineteen Gilbertese and six Ellice Islands students were sent to the Eastern Provincial School at Lodonu in Fiji. After the first year, all six Ellice Islanders had qualified for entrance to the post-primary Queen Victoria School and one of the group — Toaripi Lauti, who later became the first Prime Minister of Tuvalu — was subsequently sent to secondary school in New Zealand. Three of the Gilbertese had already been sent home, four more were returned to the Colony as not being up to standard, three had not performed satisfactorily but were allowed another year's trial, the ten remaining were considered to be making reasonable progress but not up to post-primary standard, and remained at Lodonu.² This pattern, in a less extreme form, continued

into the early 1950s. It reflected not only the continuation of Ellice Islands schools during the war, and the standards reached at the Ellice Islands School, but also the pre-war standard of education in the Gilberts and the haphazard selection of Gilbertese students by District Officers on the advice of Native Magistrates and others with whom academic merit was not always the most important consideration. Among the Gilbertese students the standard of English was so low that they had to form a separate class at Lodoni under a tri-lingual Ellice Islander. After the first few years the numbers of Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders receiving education in Fiji and New Zealand approximately equalised but in practice the number was made up of virtually all Ellice Islanders being sent on scholarships and just over half the Gilbertese. The situation improved gradually as attendance at either the King George V School or the Ellice Islands School was used as preparation for those likely to proceed to higher primary education in Fiji.

It is here, among this handful of students, that the origins of racial disharmony must be sought. They represented an embryonic élite, the Gilbertese members of which were sensitive regarding the achievements of the Ellice Islanders, the favouritism they saw in the selection of only Ellice Islanders for higher education in New Zealand, and the numbers of their own race returned to the Colony as failures. At this stage rivalry was generally expressed in personal rather than racial terms but at Ocean Island there was racial violence in 1948 when Ellice Islanders refused to join Gilbertese workers on strike. The seeds of dissension had been sown; they were cultivated in the 1950s and matured in the 1960s.

It was at the third meeting of the Colony Conference, at Makin in 1960, that the racial antagonisms that existed in the civil service first emerged in public debate. In a discussion on local government taxation and the disparities of resources found on the various islands, all speakers paid at least lip service to the principles and benefits of 'Colony unity' and the necessity for the richer islands to subsidise the poorer, but there was also reference to the inhibiting effect of the favouritism that was allegedly being practised in the civil service.³ In private, the discussions were even more acrimonious. Some Gilbertese members claimed that Ellice Islanders were not only a burden on the Colony because of their low copra production (Ellice Islands production per household was less than half that for the Gilberts) but that they occupied an undue proportion of civil service positions, that some expatriate officials favoured Ellice Islanders for appointment and promotion, and that Ellice Islanders in positions of responsibility favoured their own race in such areas as the admission of children to government schools, and the signing-on of labourers. There was one specific case which drew a great deal of comment: just after the war one Gilbertese and one Ellice Islander were promoted to the Assistant Administrative Officer grade (which included District Officers and the like) which, to that time, had always been filled by Europeans. The Ellice Islander was then steadily promoted ahead of the Gilbertese by

European officials who were impressed by his industry and efficiency and compared his abstemiousness with the social habits of his colleague. To other Gilbertese in the service, this was favouritism, promotion won by being obsequious, by performing and conforming to European expectations — a view that was reinforced, if hardly justified, by the way in which the gap between the two men steadily widened.

Just after the Makin Conference a small group of Gilbertese, mostly civil servants, began to meet in secret to discuss political affairs and the possibility of forming a political party — a possibility that became a reality in the Gilbertese National Party five years later. In the meantime, however, they called their society *Tungaru* after a traditional name for the Gilberts. As well as its almost clandestine political side, *Tungaru* was a social club which fostered Gilbertese singing, dancing and other cultural activities. Although Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders found a common purpose in negotiating new salary scales for the civil service in 1962, the strength of *Tungaru* gradually grew and as Ellice Islanders became aware of the attitudes of its members, race relations on Tarawa, particularly within the civil service, worsened steadily through 1964 and 1965.

The state of the civil service was clearly the most divisive issue in the early 1960s. Since the war the service had offered excellent opportunities for career advancement. Between 1952 and 1960 the numbers of established positions filled by Islanders more than doubled from about 250 to a little more than 600; by comparison the service increased by only one-third between 1960 and 1970. Throughout this period Ellice Islanders held about 30 per cent of all positions and an even higher percentage of senior positions. In 1964, in response to a question in the Advisory Council, the Assistant Resident Commissioner stated that of the 'key positions' in the civil service (interpreted to mean those then carrying a salary of \$1448 or more) fifteen were filled by Gilbertese and thirteen by Ellice Islanders.⁴ But a closer look at the Civil List shows that at least half the 'Gilbertese' in his calculations were of mixed Gilbertese-European descent; had petitioned for non-native status (granted, in practice, to persons of mixed descent who adopted and could sustain a 'European' lifestyle) and, generally speaking, formed a distinct part-European racial and social component in the community. Hence, different criteria from those adopted by the Government show that there were approximately twice as many 'native-Ellice' as 'native-Gilbertese' in 'key positions' at this time. At a lower level, \$800 upwards, the numbers (fifty-two each) were equal, despite the much higher population of Gilbertese. Among the Fiji-trained medical officers, Ellice Islanders outnumbered Gilbertese by approximately two to one.⁵

With the expansion of educational facilities on Tarawa, this same pattern was perpetuated. Entry to King George V School and Elaine Bernacchi School (for girls) was by competitive examination; in 1965,

40 per cent of places went to Ellice Islanders. Of the students granted scholarships for overseas study in the early 1960s, between 40 and 50 per cent were Ellice Islanders. Similarly, Ellice Islanders obtained a high proportion of positions with the British Phosphate Commissioners at Ocean Island and Nauru.

Although specific areas of grievance were questioned in the Advisory Council, comments from members tended to be more generalised. It was argued, for example, that the Ellice Islanders 'considered themselves cleverer and superior to the Gilbertese as a race . . . They behaved as though they owned the whole Colony'.⁶ Racial overtones also intruded into discussions on economic matters. At this time there was a growing awareness of the wasting nature of the Ocean Island phosphate deposits, the potentially difficult future, and the importance of finding other sources of revenue. The fertility of most of the Ellice Islands and their low copra production were frequently mentioned and the Gilbertese became increasingly resentful of Ellice domination of the civil service, the one sure source of future paid employment.⁷

Certainly, the Ellice Islanders had enjoyed educational advantages during and immediately after the war, and this is where the problem began, but the same employment pattern also existed among the later generations whose education was unaffected. This trend notwithstanding, the 'disrupted education' argument was frequently used by all parties in the Colony to avoid discussion of more fundamental and contentious issues. The Ellice Islanders generally displayed a greater willingness to migrate for education and employment and were prepared to make adjustments in their values and lifestyles in order to gain the greatest possible advantage from their circumstances. It was this latter attribute that was regarded most favourably by European officials, some of whom considered Ellice Islanders to be 'better' and 'more intelligent' than Gilbertese. Superficially, at least, Ellice Islanders seemed, *to them*, 'to act more like Europeans' — a trait that, for Gilbertese, might well have led to family and community censure and even ridicule. True, many Ellice Islanders did display a greater degree of confidence and regarded the Gilbertese as 'backward'; in return they were scorned for aping Europeans and for 'giving away' their culture. Thus it was not simply education and employment opportunities that bred tension but fundamental differences of attitude towards westernisation; differences that reflected widely divergent cultural backgrounds.

As tensions increased towards the end of 1964, rumours that the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were to be separated began to circulate on Tarawa. To counter these, the Resident Commissioner called a meeting of senior local civil servants in January 1965. This discussion did dampen the separation rumours but heightened rather than reduced tension as it became clear that many of those present favoured appointments to the civil service on a racial rather than a merit basis. At a meeting a week later with Trafford Smith, the Assistant Under-

Secretary of State for the Colonies, these grievances were again aired. As officials had done in the past, Smith asserted that any division would be disadvantageous for all concerned, and further argued that a degree of disharmony was inevitable (as with the Welsh and English) but not serious.⁸ Later, however, policies which caused or intensified friction were reappraised; for example, an upper limit was placed on the numbers of Ellice Islanders admitted to Colony high schools. It was against this background that the Gilbertese National Party was formed on Tarawa in October 1965 by a group of *Tungaru* members. Unstated in the Party's constitution, but made clear at its meetings, was a desire to secure a greater proportion of government jobs at the expense of Ellice Islanders and Europeans and the securing, from the latter, of at least a degree of control over government policy. Extremists within the party advocated the dismissal and repatriation of Ellice Islanders employed in the Gilberts, and the formation of two separate colonies.

The Christian Democratic Party was hardly an effective opposition, and there was little other public reaction from Ellice Islanders at this stage, though in July 1965 community leaders on Funafuti had told two British Members of Parliament that the Ellice Islands should be separated from the Gilberts and governed from New Zealand. And in the constitutional discussions of 1966 the Ellice Islanders had adopted a fairly passive role as they joined with other members of the Advisory Council in criticising the Government's proposals. In private, however, a number of Ellice Islanders began to discuss the possibility of a separate future for their people and one small group even began to plan a separate government and asked a European who had previously been a District Officer in the group to be its secretary.

The apparent passiveness of the Ellice Islanders at this time is deceptive. The years from 1964 until the introduction of the new constitution in 1967 are crucial to the development of the separation movement. In these years the initiative was definitely with the Gilbertese as an educated minority pushed for constitutional progress, brought pressure to bear on Ellice Islanders within the civil service, and criticised those government policies held responsible for the 'depressed' situation of the Gilbertese. And it was in this same period that Ellice Islanders began to fear discrimination after Britain had relinquished the reins of government. Even more than the Gilbertese agitation of the early 1960s, the 1967 constitution with its provisions for an overwhelming Gilbertese majority convinced many Ellice Islanders that they would never be able to influence government policy, that their islands would be starved of funds and their people denied opportunities for betterment.

At this stage the debate was essentially Tarawa-based although there was some awareness of the issues involved on outer islands. From 1967 the Gilbertese National Party, under the guidance of Reuben Uatua, the Chief Elected Member, deliberately played down the issues which had brought the party into existence. Reuben felt that

he could not, while representing the whole Colony as its Chief Elected Member, publicly advocate separation; if the Ellice Islanders were not prepared to accept the inevitability of Gilbertese majority rule, then it was up to them to do something about it. This lead was followed by others and the moving of the Party into the shadows eliminated the barriers which had formerly divided the Gilbertese politicians. Throughout this period the Gilbertese shrugged off any suggestion of discontent and, when the Government stated its intention of aiming towards a civil service in which positions would be filled on the basis of racial quotas, Gilbertese members supported an Ellice Islander's move to have the policy revised in favour of merit.⁹ In this same interlude, from 1967 to 1969, the possibility of future separation was discussed much more widely in the Ellice Islands themselves. The new Gilbertese position was seen as a façade and it was at this time that the Ellice stand of 'separation before self-government' emerged. Thus the initiative was transferred from the Gilbertese to the Ellice Islanders. The latter soon came to be regarded (even by the British Government) as the initiators of separation and this interpretation was given greater currency by the 'sweet reasonableness' approach of the Gilbertese leaders who adhered to their own position — also clarified in the late 1960s — that the future of the Ellice Islands was for Ellice Islanders to decide.

In 1969 the prospect of another constitutional revision again brought the separation issue to the fore. Reuben Uatiosa, the Leader of Government Business, toured the Ellice Islands seeking views on a new constitution for the Select Committee of the House of Representatives and, on his return, reported that the granting of greater responsibility to elected representatives was favoured by Ellice Islanders. Three months later, Sione Tui Kleiss, Member for the Northern Ellice, made a similar tour and then attacked this view, asserting that all Ellice Islands except one had rejected the idea of a new constitution and that the remaining island would accept change only if there was equal representation for Ellice Islanders and Gilbertese.¹⁰ There were some heated interchanges with Sione becoming the principal Ellice spokesman for separation; when the Select Committee report was tabled in March 1970, he argued that the proposed constitution would mean the 'suppression, annihilation and enslaving of the Ellice people'.¹¹ Not all Ellice Islanders were so extreme in their views: the other Ellice members in the House, for example, accepted assurances from the Government that the proposed constitution fell short of self-government and that, therefore, any decision to separate was premature.

Ellice feelings were made clear when, during a tour of the group in August 1971, Sir John Field, the Resident Commissioner, found that the people on six of the seven islands he visited favoured separation — an indication of the degree to which the separation impetus had spread from Tarawa to the Ellice Islands themselves. In December, Sione Tui Kleiss, with the support of other Ellice members, submitted a motion

for discussion in the House of Representatives seeking separation and internal self-government by January 1974. The motion was withdrawn, however, when Field persuaded members that they should examine the implications of the various courses open to them before coming to a final decision.¹² Accordingly Field prepared a paper spelling out the implications of continued unitary government, a regional/federal arrangement, and separation which he then discussed in public meetings on all Ellice Islands. The paper's emphasis was on the high employment figures for Ellice Islanders under the existing arrangement and on the costs of separation. His estimates showed the need for capital establishment expenditure of at least \$800 000 and annual recurrent aid of a similar magnitude. Constant emphasis in the paper and in the meetings was laid on the uncertainties of future aid: 'There can be no guarantee', the Islanders were told, 'that aid on the scale required would be forthcoming'. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the paper, with its depressing statistics, was designed to give the Ellice Islanders second thoughts.¹³

It had no discernible effect on their attitude, however, and the Governor accepted that they were immovable in their intentions. Then, in October 1972, Anthony Kershaw, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, visited the Colony, his major concerns being the forthcoming constitutional revision and the separation issue. It would seem that with his visit the British Government also accepted the probability of separation. The issue was further clarified when the Leader of Government Business, on behalf of the Gilbertese politicians, informed Kershaw that there were only two alternatives — separation, or a continuation on the existing basis.¹⁴ In the 1970 constitution the number of Ellice representatives had risen to eight (although the principle of having at least one member per island had also been applied to the smaller Gilberts), giving less than half the average number of voters in Ellice constituencies compared with Gilbertese; Ellice Islanders, for their 15 per cent of the population, still held about 30 per cent of jobs in the Government, in the phosphate industry, and in overseas employment; many Ellice Islanders still relied on remittances rather than on copra for cash income and were therefore regarded as failing to contribute their share to overseas earnings. The Gilbertese politicians insisted that further concessions were out of the question.

In November 1972, the British Government announced the appointment of Sir Leslie Monson, a former Deputy Under-Secretary in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: 'to study the relationship of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands; and, having regard to the suggestion that the two groups should be separated, and in the light of the political, economic, financial and social circumstances of the peoples of the two groups, to make recommendations'.¹⁵ In reality, however, Monson's inquiry was more of an examination of the ways and means and conditions of separation than the terms of reference would suggest. Monson visited the Colony for four weeks early in 1973; he

met a representative meeting at Vaitupu and then toured all other Ellice Islands.

At the Vaitupu meeting the Ellice Islanders asked for: separation by January 1974; half the Colony's reserve fund (which then totalled \$8 million but trebled before separation); half the shipping fleet; a cash equivalent of the Ellice share of capital aid expenditure on Tarawa; the expansion into a full secondary school of the Ellice Islands Church's Motofoua School on Vaitupu; the establishment of a marine training school; a guarantee of continued employment at Ocean Island; and, finally, but not least, Christmas Island.¹⁶

Most of the supporting arguments had been expressed in the past: the Gilbertese would dominate any future legislature; there was some fear of suppression and discrimination in the light of Gilbertese attitudes in the 1960s but, rather more, the Ellice Islanders were concerned that they would receive only what the Gilbertese were prepared to give, and that their own influence on government would be circumscribed. Development aid had, in the past, been concentrated on Tarawa, and in future the Gilbertese would be reluctant to decentralise to the Ellice Islands. It was also anticipated that entry to schools and training institutions on Tarawa would be on a quota basis with a consequent limiting of employment for Ellice Islanders. This much had all received prominence before but there was now, from the elders in particular, a far stronger emphasis on cultural differences and the need to preserve Ellice Islands language and customs. The Gilbertese predilection for fighting was contrasted with the low incidence of violence in the Ellice Islands, the restricted social role of Gilbertese women was compared with relative freedom of their Ellice counterparts; concern was expressed at the use of Gilbertese as a *lingua franca* in schools and training institutions on Tarawa, as well as in the civil service, and the requirement that, in order to obtain a good education, Ellice Islanders might have to remain in a Gilbertese environment for upwards of five years during their formative years and thereafter live on Tarawa for employment. Thus, the older people were prepared to see their culture westernised to a certain extent but increasingly reluctant to see their future leaders come under sustained Gilbertese influence.

To an outsider and, certainly, it would seem to Sir Leslie Monson, these might appear to be flimsy grounds for separation. In his meetings Monson constantly asked for 'reasons' — by implication, real or additional reasons — for separation. He asked how Ellice Island customs had been or could be legislated against, pointed out that mutual respect could overcome mistrust, and argued that he had seen no evidence of antagonism on the part of the Gilbertese. Given the brevity of his stay in the Gilberts, the fact that in the Gilberts he had spoken to politicians (who presented him with a prepared position) rather than to public meetings, and his lack of detailed knowledge of events in the 1960s, this is hardly surprising. It is even less surprising when one remembers that these same Gilbertese

politicians were concerned at allegations of intended discrimination and suppression and were anxious to project an image of reasonableness and regret over the whole issue. Perhaps the cultural arguments, especially in translation, might sound facile and trifling to an outsider, but many Ellice Islanders believed that by having said 'we are different peoples' they had explained their desire to separate. They felt that the Commissioner, by constantly asking for 'reasons' and by concentrating on the costs of separation, showed that he did not fully appreciate their position.

Although there was considerable discussion of financial matters in the meetings, the Ellice Islanders, because of their conviction that separation was the only course open to them, tended to pass over the projected budget deficit of \$650 000. There was talk of increasing agricultural production to reduce dependence on imports, and of reduced salaries for civil servants (even from the civil servants), but there was, overall, a firm belief that the United Kingdom Government should and would cover all costs and that, failing all else, God would provide.

Any such optimism was quickly dispelled when the British Government accepted Monson's basic recommendations: that separation should take place provided this course of action was endorsed by Ellice Islanders voting in a referendum in the knowledge that from the assets of the Colony they would receive only one ship; that they would have no claim to either future phosphate royalties or to a share of the Revenue Equalisation Reserve Fund; and that none of the Phoenix or Line Islands should be transferred to the new Ellice Islands dependency.¹⁷

Despite the assurance that discussions on constitutional and financial matters would be held, the conditions of separation led the Ellice Islanders to believe that they were, in fact, being cut off with the proverbial shilling. True, their requests had been unrealistic, but they had expected at least a proportion of reserves, guarantees of the aid required to establish and maintain an administration and, perhaps optimistically, Christmas Island. But a rationale behind the conditions can be discerned. First, they might well have been regarded as a last-ditch attempt to dissuade the Ellice Islanders from their resolve. This might also be adduced from the condition specifying a referendum in which voters, given secrecy, might change their minds or express their 'real' feelings if these differed from those of their community leaders or elected representatives. In his meetings Monson was apparently disturbed that the elders tended to dominate discussion and perhaps believed that they represented conservative rather than general opinion. The conditions were also politically important in that they satisfied the Gilbertese. It could be argued that granting even a proportion of reserves would have alienated Gilbertese opinion, and that the preservation of the reserves exclusively for the Gilbertese would eliminate any large future aid commitment and, perhaps, make separation more amicable. From the

Ellice Islanders' point of view it could be argued that in any negotiations over future aid they would be in a much stronger position at the time of separation than after independence when any share of the reserve funds had been absorbed by the recurrent budget.

Once it had accepted reluctantly that separation would take place, the United Kingdom tried to salvage as much of its position as possible by taking steps to inhibit international criticism while accepting that some embarrassment was likely and some Banaban agitation for the subsequent 'liberation' of Ocean Island almost inevitable. Here, the memories of the 1969 Anguilla incident were of paramount importance. In that case Britain had been forced to use paratroopers and London policemen to subdue a rebellious population of 6000 who had shown their anger of their treatment by St Kitts-based politicians by running a British Minister off the beach. The issue not only threatened the stability of the Labour Government in the United Kingdom but also brought international ridicule together with a demand from the Heads of Commonwealth Governments in the Caribbean that the territorial integrity of St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla should be confirmed.¹⁸ The decision to allow the referendum in the Ellice Islands approximately coincided with the decision by the Wilson Labour Government to seek closer co-operation with the United Nations Committee of Twenty-Four in the decolonisation of remaining British dependencies and provided an ideal opportunity for testing the new policy. Thus the United Nations Visiting Mission which observed the referendum in the Ellice Islands was the first invited to observe an act of self-determination in a British dependency.

The referendum was organised on a rolling basis in August and September 1974, with polling at Tarawa, all Ellice Islands and Ocean Island. A postal ballot for Ellice Islanders elsewhere in the Colony or working overseas (including Nauru) was also conducted. In all, there were an estimated 4676 eligible voters. In the meetings held before voting on each island, the conditions were again spelled out; it was emphasised that a vote for separation was also an acceptance of the conditions. It quickly became clear, however, that the Ellice Islanders simply refused to accept either the conditions or the fact that the British Government considered them to be non-negotiable. Spokesmen at all islands informed the Referendum Administrator and the Mission that they did not accept the stated conditions but intended to vote for separation anyway and then to seek a renegotiation of terms.

When the votes were counted on 1 October it was found that 3799 voters (91.94 per cent of votes cast) had endorsed separation; 293 (7.09 per cent) had voted against; and that there were 40 (0.97 per cent) spoilt ballots — a total of 4132 or 88 per cent of estimated eligible voters.¹⁹ This massive majority finally quantified the strength of Ellice feeling and the sense of national identity had existed among Ellice Islanders for generations but had only sought a distinct political

expression when it was threatened.

The intensity of feeling aroused by the whole affair was also shown by the way in which leaders among the Ellice Islanders immediately tried to identify the 293 renegades who had voted against separation. Specific identification is impossible, of course, and no breakdown by island which might have indicated trends was ever released, but a significant number of the 'no' votes might well have come from Ellice Islanders married to Gilbertese and living in the Gilberts with their Gilbertese-speaking families. The other group most likely to oppose separation would be those concerned to protect employment and pensions. Also a small number of the educated élite was convinced that racial tensions could be overcome and that an economic future too grim to be countenanced faced a separate Ellice state. One spokesman for this group was Isakala Paeniu (Nukulaelae) who consistently opposed separation from the time he was elected to the Legislative Council and appointed Member for Natural Resources in 1971. He made clear, however, that he would accept the referendum decision and work for a separate state if this was the will of the majority. Inevitably, too, there was a small group of conservatives who preferred the possible insecurity inherent in the existing arrangement to the undefined uncertainties implicit in change.

As a first step towards implementing separation an Ellice Committee was formed — composed of T.H. Layng, the Deputy-Governor and later Her Majesty's Commissioner in Tuvalu, and the eight Ellice Islands Members of the House of Assembly. The Committee heard submissions from the public and in the light of these formulated firm proposals which were put before the Ellice Separation Conference in March 1975. Attending the Conference were senior officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and from the Colony together with the Gilbertese members of the Council of Ministers and all Ellice Islands members of the House of Assembly. In the case of the politicians, however, each delegation attended only the plenary sessions and those were the sole concern of its own people.

The most important decisions reached at the Conference were that the Ellice Islands should henceforth be known as Tuvalu, meaning 'cluster of eight' or 'eight together', a traditional name for the group excluding the uninhabited Niulakita; and that formal administrative separation should take place on 1 January 1976, with 1 July 1975 as the target date for the implementation of the constitutional orders to allow separation to proceed and give each government sufficient time for planning. It was agreed that an election should be held in Tuvalu within two years of separation and that the Ellice Islands elected representatives to the House of Assembly should remain in office until that time. It was accepted that Tuvalu would adopt an equivalent constitution to that in force in the Colony with the Cabinet being composed of a Chief Minister, two other Ministers and two ex-officio members — the Attorney-General and the Financial Secretary. The Tuvalu House of Assembly would be composed of the

elected members, the ex-officio members, and Her Majesty's Commissioner as President with the power to appoint a Speaker and withdraw after consultation with the House. The Commissioner, with powers equivalent to those of a governor, was to exercise control over the usual reserved subjects together with finance because of the new colony's expected dependence on aid to meet its recurrent budget. There was to be a small civil service of about two hundreds, all but two of whom — the Attorney-General and the Secretary to Government — were expected to be Tuvaluans; pensions earned in the Colony were to be protected. Some of the physical requirements for the new government were met in the reconstruction following Hurricane Bebe and further construction began once separation had been approved. Apart from the provision of the usual offices and services on Funafuti, the new capital, these included the expansion of Motofoua School on Vaitupu to high school status and its transference to government control. In addition, Tuvaluans were guaranteed access to a number of places in the Marine Training School, the Technical Institute, the Teachers' College and the School of Nursing on Tarawa but, nonetheless, the new Government of Tuvalu immediately began planning for its own facilities or for the admission of its students to alternative institutions elsewhere. Citizenship was a straightforward issue except for those few Ellice Islanders of mixed descent, or themselves married to Gilbertese, who wished to remain in the Gilberts; to cater for such cases each government made provision for a tribunal which might award belonger status but not full citizenship.²⁰

Once separation had become a certainty, there was little residual tension between the two races and, whatever their private feelings, politicians and officials on both sides managed to establish working relationships only occasionally marred by rancour and pettiness. Administrative separation proceeded smoothly and here it was important that firm but perceptive over-riding control was exercised by J.H. Smith, Field's successor as Governor, and by his deputy, T.H. Layng, who was made responsible for detailed planning for separation before becoming Commissioner for Tuvalu. When it came to the point, many Tuvaluans regretted leaving the relative security of their life and employment on Tarawa for the incompleting buildings and poorer facilities on Funafuti. They were reminded again of the very emphatic British statements to the effect that Tuvalu could only expect a very modest level of financing for government and services. At a personal level many people of both races suddenly found the issues to be much less important than they had imagined, and as friends parted some began to wonder whether separation was necessary after all. For the most part the politicians had no doubts at all and carried through their planning with all possible speed until, on 1 October 1975, the constitutional orders for separation took effect. At the first meeting of the new Tuvalu House of Assembly Toaripi Lauti was elected as Chief Minister with the task of guiding Tuvalu to independence.

Seen in retrospect there is a certain inevitability about the partition of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. It was not just that Britain had joined two such diverse peoples, or included so many islands scattered across such a vast expanse of ocean, but that the two races developed their self-awareness in their relationship with each other, and each saw the other as the cause of all problems and the source of all grievances. While it is true enough that, in public at least, the Ellice Islanders made all the running after 1967 because they were a minority and therefore the most likely to suffer if separation did not go through, the Gilbertese élite was as emphatic in its desire to be rid of the Ellice Islanders as were the latter in their desire to leave. What brought inevitability into the situation — unless bloodshed was to be a real possibility — was the failure of both the British Government and the British officials in the Colony to recognise the importance of the racial issue in the 1960s. For so long they had focussed their myopic gaze upon the phosphate industry, the problems that its termination would bring, and their desire to usher the Colony into independence financially as well as constitutionally, that when the issue finally erupted into the open they were taken unawares. It was not until 1971 that separation was even perceived as a serious issue by the British Government, and by then it was too late to turn back the tide. Ironically, an earlier generation of officials had been more perceptive. In the immediate post-war years, High Commission staff saw separation as inevitable and in 1945 they held unofficial talks with their New Zealand counterparts to consider the possibility of either New Zealand taking over the Ellice Islands or of Britain resuming responsibility for the Tokelaus to make a more viable unit when the time came. Nothing came of the proposals.

In the years leading up to the transference of power the colonial administration neither perceived the strength of the emerging movement for separation nor realised that for more than seventy years colonial policies had directly and indirectly contributed to the sentiment that lay behind it. The Gilbert and Ellice groups, each with a distinctive language and culture, were combined under a single administration without any serious attempt being made to foster integration; throughout the 20th century it was only British rule that the Islanders had in common. From the 1950s policies of centralisation were rigorously pursued on the grounds of cost and efficiency; counter-proposals that decentralisation might foster political unity and help dispel notions that everything went to Tarawa and nothing to the outer islands were occasionally heard, but generally ignored. The starving of outer islands of development funds affected both groups but, so far as Ellice Islanders were concerned, the Gilbertese had Tarawa and they, the Ellice Islanders, had to travel to the Gilberts for education, employment, good medical treatment, and the fringe benefits, both economic and social, of a growing urban centre. Although the provision of some services in the Ellice — a secondary school for example — would not have removed the root

causes of the separation impulse, some indication of real government interest in the group would have been important in countering charges of neglect from Ellice Islanders living on their home islands and not directly involved in the competition for employment. Rather than undertake a bold decentralisation programme in the late 1960s when it might have had some impact before the groundswell for separation really began, the Government tended to ignore the issue fearing, perhaps, that such decentralisation might be seen by separationists as providing the infrastructure for an Ellice state.

The Government also made its own position more difficult by its apparent acceptance of the attitude, first adopted by the Gilbertese and then by the Ellice Islanders, that a decision on whether or not to separate was a matter for the Ellice Islanders alone. In talks with senior British officials, for example, the Ellice Islanders were constantly told to consider all the implications of separation — especially those concerning employment — before they made up their minds. Opportunities to reassert Britain's authority were passed by until it was too late. When the Colony was separated from the other Western Pacific High Commission territories in January 1972, the change could have been made conditional on a continuation of the existing arrangement. Aid-funding could also have been made the occasion in the same manner in which Australia, in 1974, made Papua New Guinea's triennial aid grant conditional upon continued unity. Monson tried to emphasise that the final decision would rest with the United Kingdom Government, but with little effect; the policy of first ignoring, then considering, but never rejecting, demands for separation allowed the movement to develop in the belief that its aims would be met.

Ultimately, of course, that is precisely what did happen with the acceptance of the United Kingdom and the blessing of the United Nations. In the final analysis both the referendum and the Visiting Mission became almost irrelevant to the central matter of separation for the Ellice Islanders because they regarded the referendum as unnecessary in the light of their repeated representations to Field, Kershaw and Monson. In their eyes it was no longer an issue worthy of debate because the outcome was a foregone conclusion. Accordingly, they threw themselves into preparations for the entertainment of the United Nations delegation. Most of the Ellice Islanders had heard of the United Nations, and believed it to be associated with international assistance and goodwill, but had little understanding of its political stance on decolonisation. Just as they were bewildered by questions that sought to elicit information on their oppression or exploitation by their colonial masters, so the august dignitaries from the world body were bewildered by answers that asserted that colonialism and Christianity had brought the Ellice people from darkness to light and that Britain had succoured them as only a caring parent could do.²¹ In the midst of feast and *faatele* (dancing), discussions of human rights, exploitation and other non-issues, the Ellice Islanders cast their

votes for separation. The result finally convinced the British Government that its worst fears were correct and that there was no avoiding political realities even in this remote island world; to the Gilbertese politicians it brought relief that the issue was resolved; and for the Ellice Islanders it was the final ritual to be performed before the millennial dream could be realised.

EPILOGUE

From separation to independence

Between 1 October 1975 and 1 January 1976, a separate administration was established for Tuvalu and, once the initial movement of personnel had taken place, each government quickly developed a momentum and character of its own. For its part, the Government of the Gilbert Islands continued fairly much as before, though with inevitable adjustments to be made in the civil service, but found the path to independence littered with obstacles created by the High Court action for compensation brought by the Banabans, the sensitivity of the United Kingdom Government on this and related issues, and conflict with the United Kingdom over future aid. Tuvalu's problems were of a different kind; not only did the Government lack the basic infrastructure necessary to govern even so small a country, but there were few clear plans for future economic and political development. Yet within four years of separation the Gilbert Islands had become the independent republic of Kiribati (pronounced Kiri-bas, the local rendition of Gilberts) while the Tuvaluans had achieved some considerable satisfaction from celebrating their independence several months earlier.

Tuvalu

The shape of the Government of Tuvalu that emerged between separation and independence was a compromise, and not always a happy one, between two irreconcilable forces. The United Kingdom Government tried, in effect, to insist on both the letter and the rather punitive spirit of the original conditions of separation. There were certainly good reasons for keeping the number of expatriate employees (and associated costs) as low as possible, but Tuvalu's leaders saw this as an attempt to fob them off with second-class independence and were determined that services would be established at a more substantial level. Eventually they were successful in forcing the British Government to retreat from the position laid down in the conditions of separation and, by doing so, vindicated their insistence on ignoring these when voting in the 1974 referendum. In this, and in the aid funds it attracted, Tuvalu was helped by a flurry of diplomatic activity late in 1976 caused by initiatives in the Pacific region from both the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China, and was a major beneficiary of the dramatic increase in aid to the Pacific countries by Australia and New Zealand which coincided with, but was not entirely caused by, the communist moves.

There were inevitable delays and disappointments at separation: the Chief Minister had neither an official residence, nor an office; stores and building supplies were not delivered on time; building programmes fell behind; there was no development plan until the end of 1977; and projects which could have had a major impact on the economy — the deep-sea wharf at Funafuti, the marine training school, and an inter-island sea-plane service, for example — did not get under way until much later. But there were achievements as well: under a \$1 million aid project Motofoua School was taken over from the Church by the Government and expanded into a secondary school teaching to School Certificate level; the Government was able to provide for its civil servants on Funafuti while avoiding the long-term recurrent costs of staff housing under a home-ownership loan scheme; and, despite the difficulties, most government buildings and houses were completed by 1977.¹

This completion of the most basic facilities allowed the Government to turn its attention to planning for future development that would, it hoped, increase the range of services, generate employment, and reduce the country's dependence upon budgetary assistance. With taxes and duties regularly accounting for a quarter of a recurrent budget which rose steadily from \$1.2 million for 1976 to reach \$2 million in 1979, the main concern was with projects that would generate additional income and foreign exchange. Most prominent among these was the philatelic bureau in which the Government had an 80 per cent share-holding with the expertise and the remainder of the capital being provided by a British firm. In 1976, its first year of operation, the bureau earned \$300 000; subsequent income from philately ranged from \$350 000 to \$750 000 a year. Overall, the Tuvaluan economy performed much better than expected between separation and independence and, at about \$500 000 a year, the grant-in-aid from Britain was substantially less than estimated.² In the hope of eventually becoming financially independent the Tuvalu Government looked primarily to the sea: to a *bêche-de-mer* industry which might generate export earnings of \$50 000 a year; to fees and royalties in respect of the 200 mile economic zone declared shortly after independence; and remittances from Tuvaluans employed in the merchant marine of foreign countries. Remittances from such men, and those employed in the phosphate industry, remained a major factor in the village economy and in contributions to overseas earnings. By independence, these exceeded \$800 000 a year. As one-half of this came from merchant seamen trained at Tarawa before separation, Tuvalu gave a high priority to its own school that it might train more men than would be admitted under quota in Tarawa. The school, built with Australian aid, was completed in 1979 but then found difficulty in placing its graduates because of bans imposed on such schemes by international shipping unions. The search for employment at home and overseas was also given greater urgency by the need to absorb the 200 Tuvalu workers made redundant by the

exhaustion of the phosphate deposits at Ocean Island.

While planning was simple enough, performance was more difficult. The scale of Tuvalu society and the Tuvalu Government is so small, and so many of its people are still committed to a life of affluent subsistence, that its capacity to absorb capital aid and development projects was soon reached, and at independence Tuvalu had difficulty in spending its aid grants. There were restraints on spending imposed by scale and by distance, but there were also restraints arising from inexperience in preparing aid applications for specific projects, and from a shortage of experienced senior officials. This latter condition was partly imposed by the parsimonious attitude of the British Government towards the new administration, and was partly the result of choice as Toaripi Lauti and his Ministers insisted upon having Tuvaluans in all policy-making and executive positions. It was inevitable also that there should be delays and bickering as the new civil service was established; as the civil servants settled to a separate and more circumscribed existence; that in so small a community (at independence there were less than 2000 people living on Funafuti and the total population was about 7200) personal and family rivalries should intrude into official duties; and that the Tuvaluans should meet some of their kin obligations by helping their relatives to find work to a degree that might be called nepotistic in western society. Under the circumstances, however, it was surprising not that so little should be achieved, but so much; in just three years Funafuti was transformed from a hurricane-scarred administrative centre into the capital of an independent nation.

The preparation for independence began almost as soon as separation was complete. While most Tuvaluans were emphatic in their desire to seek a separate destiny from the Gilbertese, there was still bewilderment at the notion of decolonisation, at the idea that Britain should want to forsake its colonial trust. Yet they accepted that it was their politicians who had achieved the first, essential goal, and they had no desire to be left behind other Pacific nations. From that point, the leadership of Toaripi Lauti was sufficiently persuasive for the goal of independence to win widespread acceptance. In May 1976 the Chief Minister toured the islands, proposing independence by October 1977 and a republican constitution closely modelled on that of Nauru under which members of the legislature select a President who then becomes both Head of Government and Head of State. Initially the Tuvaluan Government proposed a constitutional convention in lieu of the general election which, in British dependencies, had been the standard method of testing the willingness of the populace to accept independence. Later, in view of the reluctance of the United Kingdom Government to accept this departure from precedent, the Cabinet opted for the drafting of a constitution by a committee composed of all members of the House of Assembly and a new target for independence early in 1978. Professor David Murray, Professor of Public Administration at the University

of the South Pacific, who had already been involved in constitutional planning in the Gilbert Islands, then visited Tuvalu and outlined constitutional principles and alternatives at a series of public meetings. By the end of 1976 the proposed independence date had been set back even further, to 1 October 1978, with a general election to be held towards the end of 1977.

The Committee on the constitution toured all islands before reaching its conclusions in February 1977. The Committee was emphatically of the view that because Tuvalu had virtually handled its own affairs since separation, it should proceed directly to independence without an intervening period of self-government. It was evenly divided, however, as to whether Tuvalu should become a republic or a constitutional monarchy. The impasse was resolved by the Chief Minister (who himself wanted a Nauruan-style republic) when he did not vote on the issue. This left a majority in favour of having the Queen, represented by a Tuvaluan Governor-General, as Head of State and, in the absence of a party-system, a Prime Minister chosen by Members of Parliament. The Committee rejected the idea of electing Ministers in the same way as the Prime Minister and opted for four Ministers to be appointed by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister. Parliament was to appoint a Speaker and, should the person chosen be a Member of Parliament, his seat would be filled at a by-election. Unless Parliament was prematurely dissolved, elections were to be held every four years. To meet the particular circumstances of Tuvalu, the Attorney-General would be a member *ex-officio* of both Cabinet and Parliament though not empowered to vote either in a Prime Ministerial election or on a vote of no confidence. The Committee recognised the difficulties inherent in having a small legislature but rejected suggestions that Presidents of Island Councils should become non-ministerial Members of Parliament; that island representatives be joined by national members elected on a combined roll; or that all islands be given increased representation. Instead, it recommended an additional member for the four most populous islands — a provision that was agreed to at the time by the representatives of the smaller islands but later caused them to vote against the report as a whole when it was considered by the House of Assembly. To increase the accountability of Parliament to the people, the Committee accepted Professor Murray's advice to defer discussion on all non-urgent bills until they had been referred to Island Councils for comment. The constitution was to be entrenched to the extent that any amendment would require the support of two-thirds of members at its second reading.³

As with separation, decisions concerning the timing and constitution for independence were not determined in any referendum or election but, rather, the proposals from the acknowledged leaders were debated and confirmed in village meetings. There was therefore little prospect that the election held in August 1977 would produce representatives opposed to independence as such. However the places

of the incumbent politicians were by no means secure, especially as a number of civil servants were either sufficiently discontented in their existing roles, or sufficiently attracted by the prospect of office, to seek election. In accordance with the constitutional recommendations brought down earlier, Funafuti, Nanumea, Niutao and Vaitupu returned two members each to give twelve elected members in all. In the election, six of the sitting members including all three Ministers were returned. At one level the campaigns run by some candidates were about policies, or alternative styles of government, but the real issues were more personal and, given the smallness of the constituencies and the importance of family loyalties (and family size), most candidates did not campaign at all in the usual sense knowing in advance that they could do little to affect the final outcome.

Toaripi Lauti's main rival for the position of Chief Minister was Henry Naisali who had won the Nukulaelae seat from Isakala Paeniu. Henry had been one of the most senior local civil servants in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony before separation. He was a former opponent of separation, Tuvalu's first Financial Secretary, and an advocate of recruiting expatriates to give a more efficient civil service. There was controversy when Henry alleged that he had been isolated on Nukulaelae after the election because the Chief Minister had reorganised the shipping schedule for bringing members to Funafuti in order to woo undecided members. The charge was denied; Toaripi Lauti was re-elected as Chief Minister and, in turn, reappointed his former Ministers. Henry, with three supporters, became a vehement critic of the new Government. In some respects, the members in opposition could outweigh the Ministers in their education and experience but that, too, became something of a liability because they had put themselves forward and challenged established authority in a way that was not in accordance with Tuvaluan custom.

All members were agreed on independence, however, and in February 1978 a constitutional conference at which Tuvalu was represented by its politicians, two senior officials and two church delegates, was held in London at Marlborough House. The Tuvalu Government's constitutional proposals differed significantly from the earlier committee report in only two aspects; it now accepted the idea of a period of internal self-government as a prelude to independence, and also wanted Parliament to appoint a Speaker from among its private members. The basic constitutional proposals had been known and all but agreed upon in advance, however, and the conference was less concerned with the shape of the independence constitution than with the financial settlement that would accompany it. The Tuvaluans argued strongly for their own investment fund — the equivalent of their share of the Revenue Equalisation Reserve Fund that had been retained in the Gilberts — which, when invested, would allow the new nation to balance its recurrent budget. The proposal had its merits: it would have removed the sense of injustice felt by the Tuvaluans ever

since the conditions of separation had been announced in 1974; it would have allowed the Government of Tuvalu to plan on the basis of known resources; and it would have ensured that Tuvalu did not remain permanently dependent on outside aid. It was a proposal which might have given real substance to Tuvalu's independence but it proved to be too adventurous for the British Government which, in the end, agreed to do no more than balance the recurrent budget to a maximum of \$1.5 million for 1979-80; to provide \$4.8 million in development aid between 1978 and 1980; and to provide a Special Development Fund of \$4.5 million which would be available without a time limit. The levels of recurrent and capital aid beyond 1980 were to be fixed in future negotiations. It was not quite what the Tuvaluans wanted, but on precedent it was not ungenerous for a country with an area of 25 square kilometres, a population of 7200, and an annual budget of less than \$2 million.⁴

With the financial and constitutional provisions for independence agreed, the progression through self-government to independence was relatively smooth. On 1 October 1978 the Union Jack was lowered and the Tuvaluan flag raised in its place. Because HRH Princess Margaret, who had taken part in the earlier stages of the celebrations, was unwell, the final rites of colonialism were performed by T.H. Layng, Her Majesty's Commissioner to Tuvalu. It was, perhaps, appropriate that he should, for he had taken charge of the planning for separation in 1975 as Deputy-Governor in Tarawa and had then become the first, and only, Commissioner for Tuvalu. In his first address to the Tuvalu House of Assembly in October 1975, Layng had challenged Tuvalu to reduce its budget deficit by \$100 000 a year to give self-sufficiency by the early 1980s.⁵ At independence it was still not clear whether Tuvalu could meet the challenge, whether it would become a permanent pensioner, whether the surfeit of aid would encourage expenditure on services with high recurrent costs, or whether projects could be found that would generate the income needed to give financial as well as constitutional independence. On Tuvalu Day, 1 October 1978, the answers were in the future; for Tuvaluans it was more important that their identity had been recognised, that their country had joined their self-governing neighbours as full members of the South Pacific Forum; that they were citizens of an independent nation within the Commonwealth.

Kiribati

Although constitutional separation can be tied to specific dates, the process itself was rather more gradual. From mid-1975, Ellice Islanders began leaving Tarawa and, as facilities became available at Funafuti, the exodus continued through most of 1976. On the outer Gilbert Islands, separation made hardly any impact at all except for a somewhat belated realisation that the Gilbertese people as a nation would soon take charge of their own affairs. The size of the civil service did not shrink noticeably with the reduction of its

responsibilities although within it there was a general upwards movement of Gilbertese to fill the vacancies left by the Ellice Islanders. But while some fulfilled their aspirations for higher salaries and better houses others faced continuing frustration as senior positions were filled by Europeans recruited from the United Kingdom and New Zealand. In the months after separation there was a discernible decline in the efficiency of the public service, a trend that was not helped by a lack of leadership and discretion shown by some members of the Council of Ministers.

With separation out of the way, the Gilbert Islands began to plan for internal self-government on 1 November 1976 as a prelude to independence in mid-1978 with a general election to take place no later than March of that year. In practice, self-government meant very little except that Roniti Teiwaki, a former opposition member who had been taken into the ministry in the post-separation reshuffle, became the country's first Minister of Finance, and the Governor withdrew from the Council of Ministers. However the transition assumed greater importance than expected when, at the eleventh hour and at the behest of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the Prime Minister of Fiji, the United Kingdom Government announced a two-month delay in self-government while yet another attempt was made to resolve conflict over the rights of, and compensation for, the Banabans who, since their resettlement on Rabi, had become citizens of Fiji. A number of complex issues were involved and, for the most part, the Gilbert Islands was not a major protagonist but an incidental victim.

Since the mid-1960s, the Banabans had been inspired by the Nauruans' succession to ownership and control of their phosphates, their political independence, and one of the highest *per capita* incomes in the world to seek a redress of their own grievances.⁶ As a result of their own agitation, and the advocacy of their cause in the press and at the United Nations, the Banabans' share of the proceeds from Ocean Island phosphates rose to 15 per cent on most exports from 1965 (with 85 per cent going to the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and, since separation, to the Gilbert Islands alone) and 50 per cent on a series of more recent leases mined in the 1970s. The Banabans considered using widespread publicity of their cause to shame the British government into a sizeable compensatory payment but then rejected this approach in favour of an action brought in the British High Court in 1972. Two claims were involved: the first, for \$11 million against the BPC in respect of an undertaking in the 1913 mining agreement that mined lands would be restored and replanted; and the second, for \$38.5 million, against the British Government for taxes and royalties 'wrongly' paid to the Colony. The issues and evidence are too complex to review in detail here; suffice it to say that after the longest civil hearing in British legal history, the Judge, Sir Robert Megarry, rejected the Banaban claims to an increased share of taxes and royalties, but found in their favour concerning the replanting of certain lands transferred under the 1913 agreement. He

rejected the notion of specific performance — the actual replanting of the lands by the BPC — and urged the parties themselves to see if they could negotiate a settlement. The Banabans sought \$11 million, \$73 140 an acre for each acre alienated under the 1913 Agreement; the BPC offered \$3000 an acre. Unable to agree, the parties returned to Justice Megarry, who said:

... I do not propose to attempt to set out any part of the process of arriving at a sum for damages which, in accordance with the judgement that I have already delivered, should be neither nominal nor minimal, but nevertheless not very large. In broad terms, what I have to consider is the loss to the owner of a plot of land of the advantage of having his land in its present state planted with an appropriate mixture of coconuts, almonds and pandanus, with the consequent improvement in its appearance and such possibility as there is of edible fruit being produced in due time. On the whole, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, including the nature of the terrain, I think that an appropriate sum by way of damages is \$A75 per acre.⁷

The Banabans were thus given just \$11 000 when the BPC had offered a total of \$750 000 in respect of all replanting actions.

In his judgement Megarry had rejected the notion that the British Government was a trustee for the Banabans in the strict legal sense but emphatically stated that governmental obligations, which were unenforceable in court, had been breached. In particular he referred to Grimble's attempts to persuade the Banabans to accept the BPC terms, and specifically his 'life and death' letter to the Banaban leaders in 1928, and to the Government's failure to give the Banabans proper advice in the 1947 negotiations.⁸ As a consequence of this criticism the Government sent R. W. Posnett, a senior official from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on a fact-finding tour. Then, in May 1977, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, on behalf of the BPC partner governments, offered the Banabans a \$10 million *ex gratia* payment to establish a fund for social and economic development.⁹ The Banabans rejected the offer unless and until Ocean Island was separated from the Gilbert Islands and made the home of a self-governing Banaban nation established in free association with Fiji. This latter demand had been made with increasing frequency once it had become clear that Britain was prepared to destroy the territorial integrity of the former Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony by its agreement to separation. It was a proposal that had a strong emotional appeal for the Banabans while increasing their negotiating strength during the planning for the independence of the Gilbert Islands.

The discontent felt in the Gilberts at the deferment of self-government because of the Banaban issue was intensified in May 1977 when the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs again kept the issue open by stating that the future status of Ocean Island and of the Banabans would be resolved finally at the pre-

independence talks for the Gilbert Islands.¹⁰ Earlier talks had failed. To the Gilbertese politicians it seemed that the United Kingdom Government was more concerned with quietening an issue that had assumed some importance within Britain than with concentrating upon the decolonisation of the Gilbert Islands. There was also the fear that increased compensation for the Banabans would reduce future financial assistance to the Gilberts.

The Gilbertese politicians based their opposition to the Banabans' demands on the assumption that the Banabans' disagreement was with the United Kingdom, not with the Gilbert Islands; that, for good or bad reasons, Ocean Island had been made a part of the Colony in 1916 and its resources could justifiably be taxed for the benefit of the whole; and that as the Banabans were Gilbertese the arguments used to justify the separation of the Ellice Islands simply did not apply. The debate over whether Gilbertese and Banabans are brothers or cousins is unlikely to be resolved because of the high level of contact and intermarriage between the two over the past 150 years. Nor, in the long term, is it likely to affect the position of any party to the dispute because attitudes have been fixed according to modern political and economic realities and are no longer subject to change because of historical judgements. At one level the Gilbertese saw the issue as one of need as against greed; at another there was, and is, an emotional commitment to the idea of Banaba as an integral part of the country to the extent that there was a preparedness to increase Banaban compensation so that this integrity might be preserved.

Right through to independence the Banaban issue hung like a spectre over the negotiations to determine the financial and constitutional future of the Gilbert Islands. Despite this, and the aftershocks of separation, planning continued alongside a vigorous political education programme promoted by the Governor, John Smith, who, on the basis of his African experience, showed much more awareness than his predecessors of the pressures and needs of decolonisation. In an attempt to discover the views of a wide cross-section of the population a constitutional convention was planned with the prior circulation of a series of questions for *maneaba* discussion. The people were asked their views on a host of issues: whether or not their country should have a new name, whether or not it should remain in the Commonwealth, who should be citizens, whether the government should be headed by a prime minister or a president, to list a few.

The Constitutional Convention was held at Tarawa from 21 April to 9 May 1977, with 160 delegates — including politicians, senior local civil servants, church leaders, and representatives of outer islands' *unimane*, island councils, women's organisations and the co-operative societies — and with Professor David Murray in attendance as an adviser. The most important recommendations provided for the extension of direct representation to all inhabited islands, including those in the Line group, an increase to thirty-five in the number of

elected representatives to be returned by the total of twenty-three constituencies, and a second round of elections amongst the leading candidates in those electorates where no one received an absolute majority after the first round of voting, and that the structure of government should be a blend of presidential and prime ministerial forms. Specifically, there was to be a President, chosen by popular ballot after the nomination of three or four candidates by and from the members of the single-chamber legislature, who was to be both Head of Government and Head of State. The President would, in turn, choose his Cabinet from among the members of the House of Assembly and they would be responsible to it. All members save the President were to be subject to recall by the petition of their constituents. These latter provisions reflected a degree of dissatisfaction with the existing government and a belief that it was not responsive to popular aspirations and grievances and, at the same time, a basic acceptance of the idea of a President as it had been seen to operate in the local government structure. The popularity of a presidential system reflected no disillusionment with the Queen or the Crown in principle but a belief that a President elected in this manner would, like a member subject to recall, make politicians a little more assiduous in meeting the wishes of 'the People' ahead of the priorities of 'the Government'.¹¹

Those recommendations relating to the definition of constituencies, the number of members that each should return, and other electoral procedures were incorporated in an Elections Ordinance passed in September 1977 and became the basis for the general elections held in February 1978.

As in previous elections there were no parties of any significance but, nonetheless, a number of candidates ran campaigns that depended on policy as well as personality. The most divisive issue was the Defence Force which, because of delays in recruitment and construction, was still only in an embryonic form; but even more important were differing perceptions of government. Despite the increased number of seats available, and the existence of ten multi-member constituencies, no less than eight sitting members (including one Minister) lost their seats, and five others held theirs only on the second ballot. The importance that the election had assumed in the eyes of the public was amply demonstrated in the number of relatively young and able civil servants prepared to enter into politics, many of them as a gesture of opposition towards the previous government, and a high 81 per cent turn out in the first election and a 78 per cent turn out in the second.¹²

Once elected, the Members of the *Maneaba ni Maungatabu* (House of Assembly) chose unanimously not to choose a Chief Minister from among themselves but to nominate four candidates so that a popular election might be held in accordance with the recommendations of the Constitutional Convention. Though a number of Members were prepared to seek or accept the office of Chief Minister most members

were agreed in their determination to eliminate Naboua Ratieta, the former Chief Minister, from the contest. They succeeded. Those eventually nominated were Babera Kirata, a former member of the House of Representatives who had held senior civil service positions through the 1970s; Roniti Teiwaki, a former administrative officer who had entered politics in 1974 and later became a Minister in the previous government; Taomati Iuta, a former teacher and, at the time of his election in 1978, manager of Atoll Products, a manufacturing and marketing subsidiary of the Development Authority; and, reluctantly it would seem, Ieremia Tabai, a young graduate who had worked in Treasury before entering politics to become the most vehement critic of Naboua Ratieta's government. Although only 27 years old at the time, Ieremia was as well known nationally as the former Ministers for he had benefited from the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings and his own constant travelling to outer islands. It was he who was largely responsible for presenting to an electorate that was politically naive the concept of alternative philosophies of government based on issues other than loyalty to family, village, religion or island. He was admired for his obvious willingness to sacrifice personal gain for public service, and for his preference for a simple lifestyle and Gilbertese values. He also benefited from the perceptions of politics and politicians held by many of the Gilbertese people. Naboua and his Ministers were seen as the immediate beneficiaries of the colonial legacy, as representing 'the Government' and 'Tarawa' whereas Ieremia was seen as being against Government and all that this implied, and as being more concerned with the outer islands than with Tarawa. When such judgements were made, the unpopular characteristics of Naboua's government were remembered; its very real achievements — setting the country on the path to independence, for example, or grasping the nettle that was the Development Authority — were quickly forgotten.

In the election, Ieremia won a clear endorsement with nearly twice as many votes as his nearest rival and 55 per cent of the votes cast.¹³ He immediately took his three fellow candidates into the Cabinet together with two labour leaders, Abete Merang and Ieremia Tata; Teatao Teannaki, Minister of State in the previous government; and Tiwau Awira, a former accountant with the Development Authority. Whereas the previous administration had, by chance more than by policy, been heavily dominated by Roman Catholics and by members from the northern Gilberts, Ieremia's Government drew in north and south, Roman Catholic and Protestant, civil servants and trade unionists.

The new Government soon showed its intentions and character when it repealed legislation providing for the Defence Force, made a start on the long-awaited Betio-Bairiki causeway, and concluded a fishing access arrangement with Japanese interests for the exploitation of the Gilbert Islands' 200-mile economic zone — arrangements that were expected to produce \$600 000 a year, and perhaps as much as \$1

million. In anticipation of independence a number of amendments to the recommendations of the Constitutional Convention were discussed throughout the country before they were confirmed by the House of Assembly. Most important among these were a restriction of any President to a maximum of three four-year terms in office; provision for a Vice-President to be appointed by the President; a maximum number of ten Ministers; exemption of Ministers from recall by their constituencies; and provision for the members of the House to elect a Speaker not from among themselves but from outside.¹⁴

The election had amounted to an endorsement of independence yet this, like self-government, was delayed by the Banaban issue, by negotiations concerning the joint United Kingdom-United States sovereignty over Canton and Enderbury Islands and US claims to other islands in the Line and Phoenix groups (later resolved by a renunciation of American claims), and by negotiations over the nature of the financial settlement to be offered to the Gilbert Islands at independence. Gilbertese discontent over the delays, and what was perceived as the low priority given to Gilbert Islands affairs by Britain had already been compounded by the insensitivity of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in announcing the replacement for Governor John Smith just after self-government and persisting in this intention despite a unanimous resolution from the House of Assembly that he be allowed to remain until independence.¹⁵

The Government thus faced its most difficult task, the negotiation of the financial settlement, with some anxiety as to British intentions but determined to win recognition of the view that the financial situation of the Gilbert Islands amounted to a special case and should be treated as such. There was little difficulty in obtaining agreement that there should be a continuation of development aid into the 1980s, but there was a fundamental incompatibility between the British and Gilbertese views on recurrent financing. According to the former, budgetary or recurrent aid could only be given when the recipient had no funds to cover basic costs. In this context, the Gilbert Islands was disqualified by the \$68 million Revenue Equalisation Reserve Fund which would be sufficient to meet the estimated deficit for the first seven or eight years of independence. The Gilbertese politicians, however, adhered to the original intention of Bernacchi, as endorsed by successive British Governments over two decades, that by restraining expenditure before the exhaustion of the Ocean Island phosphates (expected to occur within a few months of independence) a fund could be created the *interest* from which could help to reduce the budget deficit. Until the eve of self-government it had never been suggested that the capital in the fund should be touched to cover recurrent expenditure. Finally but reluctantly, the United Kingdom Government capitulated and agreed to subsidise the recurrent budget (estimated at about \$14.5 million at independence) by up to \$9.1 million over three years and then to renegotiate for the future. In

addition, development aid of \$26.5 million was promised for the first three years of independence.¹⁶

The final constitutional conference was again preoccupied with the Banaban issue and marred by a well-publicised but staged walk-out apparently arranged by one of the Banabans' British parliamentary advisers.¹⁷ No agreement was reached despite great efforts to find any compromise short of independence for Ocean Island. Offers of dual citizenship for Banabans, guaranteed services for Banabans who wished to return to Ocean Island, and a special seat in the House of Assembly for a Banaban representative were not taken up.

From the Gilbertese point of view, however, the issue was finally laid to rest. Only one step remained. Unable to find for the country any traditional name that had widespread support, the Government adopted the local form of Gilberts. It was as Kiribati, an independent republic within the Commonwealth, that the new nation came into being on 10 July 1979, with HRH Princess Anne in attendance.

Long ago, the island communities of the Central Pacific were virtually independent polities, recognising a cultural affinity with their near neighbours but in most cases existing apart from them. Thus the Banabans had an identity of their own, even while they shared, and acknowledged, close ties with their Gilbertese neighbours. The same was true of the islands within the Gilbert and Ellice groups. Dialects, material culture and customary law may have varied only slightly from island to island but a man from Tabiteuea saw himself as a Tabiteuean, not a Gilbertese; a man from Nanumea was a Nanumean, not an Ellice Islander or Tuvaluan. Indeed, in former times, the languages of neither group contained any term that could be collectively applied to the people who lived within them. Gradually, however, the people were brought together by their shared experiences following from contact with the West—by the churches, by youth organisations, by employment, by more frequent and more safe means of inter-island communication, and above all by colonialism. But while these forces, and the intermarriage across island if not racial boundaries that followed, helped to spread some embryonic sense of racial identification, they also created an awareness of racial differences. It was a distinction recognised very early at Ocean Island where the two races worked side by side, but separately, for most of the 20th century, but was of little importance in the rest of the Colony until the 1960s when racial competition in the civil service heightened the awareness of cultural differences and posed questions concerning the future distribution of political power. Just as it was colonialism that had brought the Islanders together, so it was colonialism or, rather, the decolonisation that was the corollary of it, that inevitably drove them apart. Each was permitted to find its own destiny because, in the final analysis, it was the least troublesome way for Britain to shed a remote dependency in the twilight of empire.

As well as being dominated by the problems arising from separation, the colonial twilight of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands was again haunted by the Banaban issue and the legacy of the phosphate industry. It was, in many ways, appropriate that it should be so, for the industry had always enjoyed a degree of influence that at least matched and often outweighed that of the Colony's government. Lord Stanmore of the Pacific Phosphate Company and his well-placed associates built a wall of influence around their profitable enterprise. Because of the peculiar circumstances of its creation the BPC was able to continue in similar vein and become something of a self-perpetuating oligarchy. In practice neither its shareholding governments nor their appointed Commissioners had as much power as senior management personnel. Governments shrank from interference while Colony officials believed themselves to be impotent against the might of the BPC. If the Colony received less than it should have done from this industry within its boundaries, the Banabans received even less. But phosphate did finance many developments in the Colony and for most Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders the industry had its compensations; it offered a chance to travel and to earn wages that could not be paralleled elsewhere even though it also meant working under dirty, dusty conditions and, often, a separation between parents and at least some of their children. From the outset the BPC became a law unto itself, a secretive body intent on preserving its power and privilege. Its overbearing presence became the obsession of more than one Resident Commissioner or Governor who knew that its advice often carried more weight in London than his own. The phosphate industry and those who ran it played a decisive part in shaping policies for the Colony from 1900 until independence.

To survey nearly two centuries of history is to give an impression of change — of new beliefs, of mobility, of adaptation to Christianity and colonialism, of the adoption of alien political systems now finding their expression in modern nationhood. But so many of these things are external; the changes apparently wrought by Christianity and by colonialism, for example, are often no more than skin-deep. There is a widespread belief that constitutional independence and the trappings of government are simply the price that has to be paid for an existence in the modern world and the enjoyment of its benefits. Beneath it all, in both Kiribati and Tuvalu, there is something immutable about the individual's ties to his kin and to his land, and a supreme identification with the island on which both are to be found.

Notes

Note: Only short titles have been given for published works cited; full details appear in the Selected Bibliography.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ISLANDS AND THEIR PEOPLE

1. Myths and legends of Gilbertese creation and migration are to be found in Arthur Grimble, *Migrations of a Pandanus People* and 'Myths from the Gilbert Islands'; Rosemary Grimble, *Migrations, Myth and Magic*. For the Ellice Islands see Kennedy, *Field Notes*, especially 153-235; Roberts, 'Te Atu Tuvalu'.
2. I am indebted to Dr D. Tryon of the Australian National University for enlightenment on the dispersal of Austronesian languages. On Micronesia see Alkire, *Peoples and Cultures of Micronesia*, 7-13; and for a general discussion on the settlement of Oceania see Bellwood, *Man's Conquest of the Pacific*.
3. Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, 45-8; Maude, *Evolution of the Gilbertese* Boti, 7.
4. Kennedy, *Field Notes*, 2; Roberts, 'Te Atu Tuvalu'.
5. For the ecology of low coral islands see Catala, 'Report on the Gilbert Islands'.
6. Maude with Leeson, 'Coconut Oil Trade', 276.
7. Wilkes, *Narrative*, V, 11.
8. Grimble, 'Canoes in the Gilbert Islands', and 'Gilbertese Astronomy', 197-224; Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, 106-24; Lewis, *We, the Navigators*.
9. The lower figure was given in Hale's first report to Hudson, commanding USS *Peacock*, following entry for 19 April 1841 in Hudson, Journal No.2 of USS *Peacock*, 11 Aug. 1840 to 19 Feb. 1842 — PMB 416; and the higher in Hale, *United States Exploring Expedition*, 93.
10. For Randell's estimates see Gulick, Journal, 1852, entry for 10 Aug. — ABCFM Papers, I; *The Friend*, XVIII(1861), 50; for Handy's see Pierson to Anderson, Aug. 1855 — ABCFM Papers, II.
11. These comments and the estimates that follow are explained and justified in Bedford, Macdonald and Munro, 'Population Estimates for Kiribati and Tuvalu'; Bedford and Macdonald, 'Population of Kiribati'; Munro and Bedford, 'Population of Tuvalu'.
12. Unless more specific reference is given the discussion that follows is based on fieldwork and on Maude's *Evolution of the Gilbertese* Boti and his 'Evolution of Local Government'; Grimble, 'From Birth to Death in the Gilbert Islands'; Lundsgaarde and Silverman, 'Category and Group in Gilbertese Kinship'; Lundsgaarde, 'Post-contact Changes in Gilbertese *Maneaba* Organisation'; Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, 53-94.
13. Lambert, 'The Gilbert Islands: Micro-Individualism'.
14. On Gilbertese land tenure see Lundsgaarde, *Cultural Adaptation*, 115-49 and 'Evolution of Tenure Principles on Tamana Island'; Maude, *Evolution of the Gilbertese* Boti, 34-8.
15. H.C. and H.E. Maude, 'Social Organisation of Banaba'.
16. Most of these reports are to be found in the South Sea Journals (SSJ) of the London Missionary Society for the years 1865-1895. The first published work of real significance is Hedley's *Atoll of Funafuti*, but Hedley has little to say on the social structure of the island. There are glimpses in Kennedy's *Field Notes* published in 1931. My main debt is to the works of Brady — 'Christians, Pagans and Government Men' and *Land Tenure, Kinship and Community Structure*.
17. Kennedy, 'Land Tenure in the Ellice Islands'; Brady, 'Land Tenure in the Ellice Islands'.

CHAPTER TWO: EARLY CONTACTS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF TRADE

1. The summary that follows is based on Maude, 'Spanish Discoveries' and 'Post-Spanish Discoveries'; Friis (ed.), *Pacific Basin*; and Beaglehole, *Exploration of the Pacific*. On Tuvalu see Chambers and Munro, 'Mystery' of Gran Cocal'.
2. [Krusenstern], *Atlas de l'Océan Pacifique and Recueil de Mémoires Hydrographiques*; Gulick, 'Micronesia', 408.
3. Langdon, 'Ellice Islands Commemorate Long-Forgotten Politician'; Maude, 'Post-Spanish Discoveries', 115; Wilkes, *Narrative*, V.
4. For general accounts of the Pacific whaling industry see Stackpole, *Sea Hunters*; Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery*; Tower, *History of the American Whale Fishery*. The discussion that follows is based largely on a sample of some 200 whaling logs representing, perhaps, one-fifth of the voyages that touched at the Gilbert and Ellice groups and Ocean Island between 1826 and 1903. See subsequent references and bibliography for further details.
5. For example in 1841 the US Exploring Expedition saw only a few fowls and dogs but no pigs at Tabiteuea and no livestock at all on the islands further north (Hudson, Journal No.2 of USS *Peacock*, 11 Aug. 1840-19 Feb. 1842 — PMB 416). Poultry was for sale on Ocean Island by 1841 (Log of the *Gideon Howland*, 9 June 1841 — PMB 863); at Kuria by 1842 (*The Friend*, II (1844), 34); at Tamana by 1843 (Log of the *Fortune*, 19 March 1843 — PMB 862); and at Nikunau by 1845 (Log of the *William and Eliza*, 20 May 1845 — PMB 837).
6. For pigs at Vaitupu see Log of the *Independence*, 21 Aug. 1827 — PMB 674 and Log of the *Fortune*, 4 April 1846 — PMB 844. See also sales to a trader at Vaitupu and Nukufetau in 1850 (Kemble (ed.), *To California and the South Seas*, 140-7) and for examples of sales to whalers at Ocean Island in 1850 (Log of the *Martha*, 4 Jan. 1850 — PMB 678); at Tamana in 1852 (Log of the *St George*, 9 Jan. 1852 — PMB 773); at Abemama in 1853 (Log of the *Gratitude*, 25 Jan. 1853 — PMB 330).
7. Wilkes, *Narrative*, V, 67.
8. Log of the *Canton*, 4 Oct. 1852 — PMB 541; Bingham to ABCFM, 5 March 1858 — ABCFM Papers, I.
9. Maude with Leeson, 'Coconut Oil Trade', 276; Log and Private Journal of Dr D. Parker Wilson, Ship's Surgeon, on the second voyage of the South Sea Whaler 'Gypsy', 23 Oct. 1839-19 March 1843 — Royal Geographical Society, London, copy in Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History, The Australian National University, Canberra; [Haley], *Whale Hunt*, 118.
10. Log of the *Independence*, 20 Oct. 1827 — PMB 674.
11. Logs of the *Howard*, 26 Nov. 1843 — PMB 831; *Sea*, 24 Jan. 1853 — PMB 795; *Canton*, 19 Aug. 1853 — PMB 541; *Philip de la Noye*, 25 Nov. 1853 — PMB 805.
12. Wilkes, *Narrative*, V, 49.
13. Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, 279.
14. Bingham to Clark, June 1876 — ABCFM Papers, IV; SSJ, Turner, 1876.
15. Log of the *Gideon Howland*, 18 Dec. 1840, 1 June 1841 — PMB 863.
16. Hudson, Journal, 9, 16 April 1841 — PMB 416; Wilkes, *Narrative*, V, 61, 91.
17. Log of the *Ann Alexander*, 30 Jan. 1848 — PMB 267; see also the log of the same vessel for 17 Feb. 1848; and logs of the *Abigail*, 13 Jan. 1850 — PMB 571; *Sun*, 11 Sept. 1861 — PMB 894.
18. Log of the *Canton Packet*, 8 Feb. 1852 — PMB 242.
19. Logs of the *Java*, 3 Jan. 1867 — PMB 871; *Triton*, 17 Oct. 1861 — PMB 818; *Oliver Crocker*, 20 Sept. 1852 — PMB 832; *Isaac Howland*, 16 Jan. 1857 — PMB 377.
20. Logs of the *Marengo*, 1 Jan. 1862 — PMB 875; and the *Norman*, 4 Feb. 1854 — PMB 381. See also logs of the *Potomac*, 28 July 1847 — PMB 384; *Oliver Crocker*, 19 May 1852 — PMB 832.
21. Logs of the *Roman II*, Dec. 1851 — PMB 816; *Prudent*, 1 Feb. 1852 — PMB 841.
22. Log of the *Howard*, 7 Feb. 1843, 23 Nov. 1843 — PMB 831.
23. Logs of the *Gideon Howland*, 22-4 Nov. 1853 — PMB 241; *Aurora*, 12 Feb. 1867 — PMB 310; *Belle*, 2 March 1852 — PMB 680.

24. Bingham to ABCFM, 23 Nov. 1857 — ABCFM Papers, I; Maude, 'Baiteke and Binoka', 206; Logs of the *Prudent*, 31 Jan. 1852 — PMB 841; *Alfred Gibbs*, 27 Jan. 1853 — PMB 841.
25. Pierson, Journal, 28 June 1855 — ABCFM Papers, II; see also Log of the *Prudent*, 25 Jan. 1852 — PMB 841.
26. Paulding, *Journal of a Cruise*, 94-103.
27. Wilkes, *Narrative*, V, 56-61; Pierson, Journal, 26 June 1855 — ABCFM Papers, II.
28. *Essex Register*, 3 March 1836 — reprinted in Ward (ed.), *American Activities*, VI, 536-7.
29. *Daily Mercury* (New Bedford), 6 Sept. 1853 — *ibid.*, 542-3.
30. Log of the *Omega*, 21 Sept. 1848 — PMB 885.
31. *The Friend*, IV (1846), 180.
32. Log of the *Alabama*, 19-24 Jan. 1848 — PMB 373; see also log of the *Alfred*, 2 April 1847 — PMB 801; for newspaper accounts see Ward (ed.), *American Activities*, V, 191-200.
33. Log of the *Alabama*, 2 Jan. 1849 — PMB 373.
34. Gulick, 'Micronesia', 409.
35. [Haley], *Whale Hunt*, 140-8.
36. Pierson, Journal, 28 June 1855 — ABCFM Papers, II.
37. Bridge, 'Reporting inquiry and steps taken in connection with wreck of "Orwell" on Peru Island' (HMS *Espiegle*, 1883) — RNAS XVI; SSJ, Phillips, 1884.
38. Log of the *St George*, 2 Jan. 1852 — PMB 773.
39. *ibid.*; on some ships the Islanders were restricted to the deck area forward of the mast — see [Haley], *Whale Hunt*, 119.
40. Log of the *Cossack*, 15 Jan. 1852 — PMB 240; see also logs of the *Alfred*, 30 April 1847 — PMB 801; *Prudent*, 31 Jan. 1852 — PMB 841; *Marie Theresa*, 8 Feb. 1860 — PMB 325.
41. Maude with Leeson, 'Coconut Oil Trade', 240. I have relied heavily upon this paper for general information and for material on Randell. Coulter, *Adventures*, II, 189-237, published in 1847 purports to be an account of a trading voyage through the Gilbert Islands in 1835 but it contains many errors and is at variance with other contemporary accounts. It appears to owe an unacknowledged debt to Wilkes' *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* which was published in 1845. It cannot, therefore, be regarded as a reliable source.
42. Log of the *Herald*, 29 July 1850 to 24 Feb. 1851 — PMB 867.
43. Pierson, Journal, 2 July 1855 — ABCFM Papers, II.
44. Logs of the *Belle*, 25 Feb. 1851 — PMB 680; *Herald*, 24 Feb. 1851 — PMB 867.
45. Log of the *Belle*, 26 June 1851 — PMB 680; Pierson, Journal, 2 July 1855 — ABCFM Papers, II.
46. Log of the *Belle*, Nov. 1851 to Sept. 1852 — PMB 680; Starbuck, *History of American Whale Fishery*, II, 412-3.
47. Log of the *Belle*, June 1853 to Nov. 1855 — PMB 680.
48. Log of the *Belle*, 14 Jan. 1859, 17-18 Jan. 1859, 21 Jan. 1859 — PMB 311.
49. Logs of the *Alfred Gibbs*, 27 Jan. 1853, 8 Sept. 1856 — PMB 802; and *Elizabeth Swift*, 16 Aug. 1862 — PMB 322.
50. Maude with Leeson, 'Coconut Oil Trade'; Mahlmann, *Reminiscences*, 10-29.
51. Maude with Leeson, 'Coconut Oil Trade', 263-7.
52. Kemble (ed.), *To California and the South Seas*; *The Friend*, X(1853), 85.
53. Bingham to ABCFM, 5 March 1858 — ABCFM Papers, I; *The Friend*, XXIV (1867), 77; XXV (1868), 22.
54. Bingham to Anderson, 11 May 1861 — ABCFM Papers, III; Scarr, I, *the Very Bayonet*, 17-19.
55. Maude with Leeson, 'Coconut Oil Trade', 269-70; Lubbock, *Bully Hayes*, 189-96, 240-5.
56. Daly to Robinson, 10 June 1874, encl. in Robinson to Goodenough, 13 June 1874; and Dupois to Goodenough, 10 Oct. 1874 — RNAS XIV; Bingham to Anderson, Jan. 1872 — ABCFM Papers, IV.

57. Maude with Leeson, 'Coconut Oil Trade', 280-3.
58. Bingham to Anderson, 20 Sept. 1862 — ABCFM Papers, III; Thurston to CO, 2 Sept. 1893 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State; Maude, 'Baiteke and Binoka', 213.
59. Moore to Erskine, 31 July 1884, in *Reports of Proceedings of H.M.S. "Dart" in the Fiji, Ellice, Gilbert, Marshall, New Britain, &c., Groups from May to September 1884* [Hereinafter *Dart* Proceedings, 1884], 16 — RNAS XVI.
60. Maude, 'Baiteke and Binoka'.
61. Bingham to Clark, 3 Oct. 1863 — ABCFM Papers, III; Taylor to Means, 28 Sept. 1881 — ABCFM Papers, V. For a general account see Gunson, 'Abaiang and its Dynasty'.
62. Munro, 'Tom de Wolf's Pacific Venture'.
63. Bridge to Erskine, 3 Oct. 1883, in *H.M.S. "Espiegle." — Report of Proceedings on Cruise to Ellice, Gilbert (or Kingsmill), Marshall, Caroline, and Pelew Islands, April to October, 1883* [Hereinafter *Espiegle* Proceedings, 1883], 14 — RNAS XVI: SSJ, Davies, 1880; Phillips, 1881; Davies, 1882; Marriott, 1883; Marriott, 1895.
64. SSJ, Vivian, 1871-2.

CHAPTER THREE: NEW GODS, NEW LAWS.

1. Gulick, Journal, 1852 — ABCFM Papers, I.
2. Sturges to Damon, 28 Sept. 1852 in *The Friend*, IX (1852), 85.
3. Pierson, Journal, 16 July 1855 — ABCFM Papers, II.
4. Bliss, *Micronesia*, 55-8.
5. Johnson (ed.), *Dictionary of American Biography*, II, 276-7; Bingham, 'Sybil's Bones'.
6. Bingham to Anderson, 15 Aug. 1860 — ABCFM Papers, III; Gulick to Anderson, 6 Nov. 1857 — *ibid.*, I.
7. Bingham to Anderson, 21 Sept. 1858 — *ibid.*, I.
8. *ibid.*
9. *The Friend*, XVIII (1861), 44.
10. *ibid.*, XLVIII (1890), 36.
11. Bingham to Anderson, 23 Nov. 1857 — ABCFM Papers, I.
12. Bingham to ABCFM, 5 March 1858 — *ibid.*
13. Bingham to Anderson, 4 Nov. 1859 — *ibid.*, III.
14. *ibid.*
15. Bingham to Anderson, 4 Nov. 1859, 15 Aug. 1860; to Clark, Nov. 1868 — *ibid.*, III.
16. Bingham to Anderson, 4 Nov. 1859, 15 Aug. 1860, 5 April 1861, 31 March 1862; to Gulick, 16 Sept. 1861 — *ibid.*
17. Bingham to Anderson, 21 Sept. 1858 — *ibid.*, I.
18. Bingham to Anderson, 4 Nov. 1859 — *ibid.*, III.
19. *The Friend*, XXV (1868), 20.
20. *ibid.*, XXVII (1870), 22.
21. Bingham to Clark, 10 Nov. 1873; 'Voyage of the *Morning Star* for the year 1875' — ABCFM Papers, IV.
22. *The Friend*, XXX (1873), 61; Bingham to Clark, 7 Feb. 1878 — ABCFM Papers, IV.
23. Taylor to Clark, 30 Sept. 1874, 2 June 1881 — ABCFM Papers, V.
24. Bingham to Clark, 7 Feb. 1878 — *ibid.*, IV; *The Friend*, XLVIII (1890), 47, 49.
25. *The Friend*, XLVII (1889), 23; XLIX (1891), 35.
26. *ibid.*, XXV (1868), 22.
27. Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, 235, 253; *The Friend*, XLIX (1891), 35.
28. *The Friend*, XLVIII (1890), 39-40.
29. *Missionary Herald*, LXVI (1870), 197.
30. Bingham to Clark, 2 Aug. 1870 — ABCFM Papers, III.
31. Taylor to Clark, 18 July 1874 — *ibid.*, V.

32. Bingham to Clark, 16 Jan. 1880, 10 May 1880; Doane, 'Report on the Gilbert Islands Mission for 1879-80' — *ibid.*, IV.
33. Unless otherwise stated the following account is based on oral traditions recorded at Tabiteuea in 1969. The general outline, if not all specific details, is confirmed in the written sources.
34. Bingham to Clark, 10 May 1880 — ABCFM Papers, IV.
35. Bray, 'Report of the 10th Voyage of the Missionary Packet "Morning Star"', 1880-1' — *ibid.*, IX.
36. Walkup to Clark, 20 Sept. 1880 — *ibid.*, VIII.
37. Taylor *et al* to Forbes, 27 Aug. 1881; Minutes and Report of the Committee on Foreign Missions respecting Kapu and Nalimu, 1882 — all in Mission Houses Museum, Honolulu; *Missionary Herald*, LXXVIII (1882), 175-6; Bray to Sturges, 29 Aug. 1881 — ABCFM Papers, IX.
38. Walkup to Means, Oct. 1883 — *ibid.*, VIII.
39. Davis to Commander in Chief, 16 Aug. 1892, in *Papers Respecting the Declaration of a British Protectorate over the Gilbert Islands, by Captain Davis, of H.M.S. "Royalist", and General Report on the Gilbert, Ellice, and Marshall Islands, 1892* [Hereinafter *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892] — RNAS XVII.
40. *The Friend*, XLVII (1889), 97.
41. Bray, 'Report of the 10th Voyage of the Missionary Packet "Morning Star"', 1880-1' — ABCFM Papers, IX.
42. Walkup to Means, Oct. 1883; to Smith, 12 Jan. 1885, 14 Jan. 1887; to Forbes, Jan. 1886 — *ibid.*, VIII.
43. See Note 42 and Walkup to Smith, 27 April 1889 — ABCFM Papers, VIII.
44. Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, 235.
45. Channon to Benton, 29 April 1911 — ABCFM Papers, XVIII.
46. See Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900*, Chapters 3-5.
47. SSJ, Murray, 1866.
48. *ibid.*
49. David, *Funafuti*, 180.
50. SSJ, Vivian, 1871-72.
51. SSJ, Murray, 1866.
52. SSJ, Marriott, 1887.
53. SSJ, Powell, 1871.
54. SSJ, Vivian, 1871; Marriott, 1883.
55. SSJ, Powell, 1871.
56. SSJ, Nisbet, 1875.
57. SSJ, Marriott, 1883.
58. SSJ, Phillips, 1884.
59. Whitmee, *Missionary Cruise*, 14-15; SSJ, Vivian, 1871.
60. SSJ, Phillips, 1884.
61. Bridge to Erskine, 15 Oct. 1883 in *Cruise of H.M.S. "Espiegle", April 24 — October 3, 1883. Report on certain groups of Islands visited* [Hereinafter *Espiegle Report*, 1883], 4 — RNAS XVI.
62. David, *Funafuti*, 25.
63. *ibid.*, 23; SSJ, Vivian, 1871; Davies, 1882.
64. David, *Funafuti*, 32.
65. SSJ, Turner, 1875; Powell, 1879.
66. SSJ, Powell, 1871; Turner, 1876.
67. SSJ, Vivian, 1871-72; Turner, 1878.
68. SSJ, Murray, 1866; Marriott, 1895; David, *Funafuti*, 23.
69. SSJ, Murray, 1866; Turner, 1876.
70. SSJ, Murray, 1866; Pratt, 1872.
71. SSJ, Wilson, 1886.
72. SSJ, Pratt, 1872; Phillips, 1881; Marriott, 1883; Phillips, 1884.
73. *ibid.*; WPHC, Miscellaneous Papers, Native Laws, Ellice Islands, 1893; Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 8 September 1892 (General Report upon Islands) in *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892, 33-53 — RNAS XVII.

74. Compare, for example, the views of Phillips in SSJ, 1881 and 1884 with Marriott's comments on Swayne, the British Resident, in SSJ, 1895.
75. SSJ, Phillips, 1884.
76. SSJ, Marriott, 1887.
77. SSJ, Pratt, 1872.
78. SSJ, Davies, 1882. On the pastors see also Munro, 'Kirisome and Tema'.
79. SSJ, Powell, 1879; Davies, 1880; Marriott, 1883.
80. SSJ, Turner, 1878; Newell, 1885.
81. SSJ, Turner, 1878; Phillips, 1881; [Prout], 'Journal kept on Beru 1882-1888' — E.W. Gurr Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
82. SSJ, Newell, 1883.
83. SSJ, Powell, 1879; Phillips, 1881.
84. Thurston, 'Journal kept . . . during his cruise to inaugurate the British Protectorate over the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1893', 10 July 1893 — National Archives of Fiji. [*lotu popi* = Roman Catholicism].
85. SSJ, Vivian, 1871; Phillips, 1881.
86. SSJ, Powell, 1879; Davies, 1882.
87. *The Friend*, XXV (1868), 18.
88. The standard work on the Catholic mission in the Gilbert Islands is Sabatier, *Sous L'Équateur du Pacifique*, now translated by Nixon as *Astride the Equator*. References are to the English edition. See also Hartzler, *Les Îles Blanches des Mers du Sud*.
89. Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, 168-75.
90. *ibid.*, 195.
91. *ibid.*, 181-4.
92. *ibid.*, 198-9. Sabatier's account coincides in all important particulars with the oral traditions of the island which have been used here to supplement his material.
93. *ibid.*, 206-7, 275.
94. Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 9 Aug. 1892, *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892, 26 (see also 28-9) — RNAS XVII; Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, 214.
95. *The Friend*, XLVIII (1890), 39-40.
96. *The Friend*, L (1892), 35; Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, 199.
97. Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 9 Aug. 1892, *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892, 26 — RNAS XVII.
98. Sabatier, *Astride the Equator*, 183, 199.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LABOUR TRADE AND IMPERIAL INTERVENTION

1. For general accounts of the labour trade see Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation*, and Scarr, 'Recruits and Recruiters'.
2. Fitzroy to Grey, with enclosures, 24 Dec. 1847 — CO 201/386.
3. Shineberg, 'French Labour Recruiting'.
4. Maude, *Slavers in Paradise*, 74-82, 88-91.
5. For 1864-9 see March to Clarendon, 17 Dec. 1869 — FO 58/126; figures for 1870-75 have been calculated from information published in the *Fiji Times* for those years; for subsequent years see Fiji, Immigration Dept., *Register of Polynesian Immigrants*. Numbers for the years before 1875 must be regarded as minima; it is possible that Gilbertese immigration was even higher than indicated here.
6. March to Clarendon, 17 Dec. 1869 — FO 58/126. British consular records show 631 New Hebridean and 1018 Gilbertese recruits between Nov. 1864 and Nov. 1869.
7. 'Memoranda by Mr Sterndale on some of the South Sea Islands' — NZ, AJHR, 1874, A-3B, 3, 11; Masterman, *Origins of International Rivalry*, 77; Firth, *German Recruitment*, 18, 309.
8. McArthur to MacGregor, 29 June 1885 — WPHC 4, 108/1885; Churchward to Thurston, 7 Oct. 1885 — *ibid.* 189/1885.

9. Cusack-Smith to Thurston, 17 Oct. 1894 — *ibid.*, 277/1894; see also WPHC 4, 73/1894; 161/1894.
10. Newbury, *Administration of French Oceania*, 163-5; Moore to Erskine, 31 July 1884, *Dart Proceedings*, 1884 — RNAS XVI; Maude, 'Baiteke and Binoka', 221.
11. Newbury, *Administration of French Oceania*, 307-8; Dickson to im Thurn, 22 June 1910 — WPHC 4, 984/1910.
12. Unless otherwise stated information on recruiting for Hawaii has been drawn from Bennett, 'Immigration, "Blackbirding", Labour Recruiting?.'
13. For example, of the 44 recruits taken to Fiji by the *Eastward Ho* in 1891, 19 had previously worked in Fiji or Samoa — Fiji, Immigration Dept., Government Agents' Journals, No. 62, Stephens, *Eastward Ho*, 10 Nov. 1890 — 11 Feb. 1891.
14. Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 12 Aug. 1892, *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892, 60-1 — RNAS XVII; Davis to Scott, 17 Nov. 1892, encl. in Scott to Thurston, 21 Nov. 1892 — WPHC 4, 270/1892.
15. Campbell to Thurston, 8 June 1896 — *ibid.*, 278/1896.
16. 'Immigration Agent's Annual Report upon Pacific Islands Immigration' — QVP, 1896, 111, 189.
17. See correspondence in WPHC 4, 156/1895.
18. Scarr, *I, the Very Bayonet*, 97.
19. Log of the *Arnolda*, 17 Feb. 1873 — PMB 721; see also logs of the *Triton*, 29 Jan. 1873 — PMB 368; and the *Northern Light*, 6 Feb. 1874 — PMB 233.
20. Memo. by Burge, encl. in Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 29 Jan. 1918 — WPHC 4, 593/1918; see also 'South Sea Islanders' — QVP, 1878, II, 39.
21. Bennett, 'Immigration, "Blackbirding", Labour Recruiting?', 16.
22. SSJ, Pratt, 1872.
23. SSJ, Turner, 1878.
24. Maxwell to Wilson, 24 July 1881, *Emerald Proceedings*, 1881, 7 — RNAS XI.
25. Challis to Stirling, 18 Nov. 1870 — RNAS XIV.
26. Murray, *Forty Years' Mission Work*, 385-6; Moresby to Stirling, 12 Sept. 1872 — GBPP, 1873, L, 163-4; Maude, *Slavers in Paradise*, 76-7.
27. Statement by Walter Oates to Detective Richard Elliot, 20 Nov. 1871, encl. in Stirling to Admiralty, 19 Jan. 1872 — GBPP, 1873, L, 188-90.
28. Statement by Robert Randolph, encl. in March to Granville, 30 July 1872 — GBPP, 1873, L, 293; March to Granville, 22 Oct. 1872, with enclosures, — *ibid.*, 278-9.
29. Palmer, *Kidnapping in the South Seas*, 83-6.
30. *ibid.*, Chapters X-XIV.
31. Whitmee, *Missionary Cruise*, 29-31.
32. Newbury, *Administration of French Oceania*, 164.
33. Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 18 July 1892, *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892, 56 — RNAS XVII.
34. Fiji, Immigration Dept., Government Agents' Journals, No. 25, Whitford, *Rose*, 10 Aug.-14 Oct. 1880; No. 42, Bevan, *Minnie Hare*, 4 April-28 May 1883; No. 61, Lockhart, *Elizabeth*, 21 Jan.-25 March 1887.
35. Palmer, *Kidnapping in the South Seas*, 101.
36. Randolph began as an agent for Randell on Abaiang and he subsequently became an independent trader. By 1872 he was part-owner (with Michael Eury, a former partner of Robert Towns) and captain of the *Rifle*, a schooner licensed by Consul March of Fiji to carry 36 recruits. — Moore to Shadwell, 25 July 1872, encl. in Admiralty to CO, 8 Nov. 1872 — GBPP, 1873, L, 205.
37. Bennett, 'Immigration, "Blackbirding", Labour Recruiting?', 6; Murray, *Forty Years' Mission Work*, 405; SSJ, Murray, 1886. Because it disapproved of the morals of one captain the American Board discouraged recruiting in 1880-1 — Bingham to Clark, 11 June 1879 — ABCFM Papers, IV.
38. For Fiji, 1876-95, 43 per cent were women; for Hawaii, 1877-87, 49 per cent; for Tahiti, *Forçade de la Roquette*, 45 per cent.
39. Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation*, 45-6.
40. Fiji, Immigration Dept., Government Agents' Journals, No. 47, Wood, *Midge*, 29 June-25 Aug. 1883.

41. This information is drawn from Fiji, 24 voyages, 1876-95 — Fiji, Immigration Dept., *Register of Polynesian Immigrants*; Hawaii, 9 voyages, 1877-87 — Bennett, 'Immigration, "Blackbirding", Labour Recruiting?', 26-7; Tahiti, 1 voyage, 1885 — Newbury, *Administration of French Oceania*, 307; Central America, 2 voyages, 1891-2 — Davis to Scott, 17 Nov. 1892, encl. in Scott to Thurston, 21 Nov. 1892 — WPHC 4, 270/1892.
42. Calculated from Fiji, Immigration Dept., *Register of Polynesian Immigrants*.
43. Bennett, 'Immigration, "Blackbirding", Labour Recruiting?', 26-7; 'Immigration Agent's Annual Report upon Pacific Islands Migration' — QVP, 1899 (1st Session) 1295; 1900, V, 686; Campbell to Thurston, 8 June 1896 — WPHC 4, 278/1896.
44. See Bedford, Macdonald and Munro, 'Population Estimates for Kiribati and Tuvalu'.
45. Calculated from Fiji, Immigration Dept., *Register of Polynesian Immigrants*.
46. See Bedford, Macdonald and Munro, 'Population Estimates for Kiribati and Tuvalu', 226-7.
47. Moore to Erskine, 31 July 1884, *Dart Proceedings*, 1884, 14-16 (also related reports and papers at 22-8) — RNAS XVI; *The Friend*, XLIII (1885), 13-14.
48. See Bach, 'Royal Navy'.
49. See Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands*.
50. On the origins of this office and its early history see Scarr, *Fragments of Empire*.
51. Hayter, Journal of Voyage in HMS *Basilisk*, Jan. 1871 to July 1873 — PMB 626 (Hayter was First-Lieutenant on the *Basilisk*); H.E. Maude, personal communication.
52. Wilson to Officers in Command of HM's ships on the Australia Station, 15 May 1879 — RNAS XIV.
53. The most useful naval reports on the Gilbert and Ellice Islands are those of Pugh (HMS *Renard*), 1876 — RNAS XIII; Maxwell (HMS *Emerald*), 1881 — RNAS XV; Bridge (HMS *Espiègle*), 1883 — RNAS XVI; Moore (HMS *Dart*), 1884 — RNAS XVI; Rooke (HMS *Miranda*), 1886 — RNAS XVII; Davis (HMS *Royalist*) 1892 — RNAS XVII; see also Le Hunte (who travelled on HMS *Espiègle* as a Judicial Commissioner in 1883) to Des Voeux, 10 Oct. 1883 — WPHC 4, 159/1883.
54. See, for example, Thurston to CO, 3 May 1889 — WPHC, Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State; *The Friend*, XXXI (1872), 88-9; XLVIII (1890), 47, 49; L (1892), 35.
55. 'Minutes of Proceedings of H.M. Schooner *Renard* at the Islands of Apiang [sic] concerning the murder of the late St John Curtis Keyse, between 24 April and 1 May 1876' — RNAS XIII; see also *The Friend*, XXXIII (1876), 89-90, 97-8.
56. Moore to Erskine, 31 July 1884, *Dart Proceedings* 1884 — RNAS XVI.
57. Maxwell to Wilson, 24 July 1881, *Emerald Proceedings* 1881 — RNAS XV.
58. Rooke to Tryon, 21 June 1886, 23 July 1886, *Miranda Proceedings* 1886 — RNAS XVII.
59. Circular Despatch from the Secretary of State, 3 May 1886 — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State; see also Morrell, *Britain in the Pacific Islands*, Chapters 8-12.
60. Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 8 Sept. 1892 (Island Reports), *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892 — RNAS XVII.
61. Thurston to CO, 2 Sept. 1893 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State.
62. CO to Thurston (with enclosures), 5 April 1892 — WPHC, Despatches from the Secretary of State; see also CO 225/37-40.
63. Thurston to CO, 3 May 1889 — WPHC, Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State.
64. See correspondence in CO 225/39, 41: Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle*, 110-111.
65. Davis to Commander-in-Chief, 16 August 1892, *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892 — RNAS XVII.
66. *ibid.*
67. *Washington Post*, 8 Aug. 1892; Rick to Wharton, 12 June 1892 — USA, Despatches from United States Consul at Butaritari, 1888-1892.

68. White to Roseberry, 21 Nov. 1892 — FOCP 6328.
69. Rick to Wharton, 24 Sept. 1892 (acknowledging despatch of 28 April 1892) — USA, Despatches from United States Consul at Butaritari, 1888-1892.
70. See *Royalist Proceedings*, 1892 — RNAS XVII.
71. Knutsford to Thurston, 5 April 1892 — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State.
72. Thurston to CO, 4 Oct. 1892 — WPHC, Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State.
73. Thurston to CO, 23 June 1892 — *ibid.*
74. Gibson to Scott, 20 Sept. 1892 — FOCP 6328, 93-4.
75. Thurston to CO, 31 Aug. 1892 — WPHC, Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State; Ripon to Thurston, 13 March 1893 (with enclosures) — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State.
76. Scarr, *I, the Very Bayonet*, 18-19.
77. Thurston, 'Journal kept . . . during his cruise, 1893' — National Archives of Fiji.
78. *ibid.*, 4 July 1893.
79. Thurston to CO, 2 Sept. 1893 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State.
80. Thurston, 'Journal kept . . . during his cruise, 1893' — National Archives of Fiji.

CHAPTER FIVE: PAX BRITANNICA

1. See WPHC 4, 236/1892, 241/1892, 25/1893, 114/1893, 165/1893, 183/1893.
2. Thurston to CO, 6 Dec. 1892, 2 Sept. 1893 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State.
3. Swayne to Thurston, 21 Dec. 1893 — WPHC 4, 22/1894; 28 Dec. 1893 — *ibid.*, 25/1894; 13 March 1894 — *ibid.*, 105/1894; 7 Aug. 1894 — *ibid.*, 198/1894; Campbell to Thurston, 28 March 1896 — *ibid.*, 209/1896.
4. Thurston to CO, 31 Aug. 1892 — WPHC, Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State.
5. *Native Laws of the Gilbert Islands*, 1894; *Native Laws of the Ellice Islands*, 1894. The term Kaubure is derived from an Ellice noun meaning councillor. Generally, the term Kaubure was used in the Gilberts, and Kaupule in the Ellice. Here, Kaubure has been used in general discussion.
6. *ibid.*; Swayne to Thurston, 29 Dec. 1893 — WPHC 4, 27/1894.
7. Swayne to Thurston, 7 Aug. 1894 — *ibid.*, 198/1894; 10 Aug. 1894 — *ibid.*, 201/1894.
8. Maude, 'Evolution of Local Government', 37.
9. Swayne to Thurston, 29 Dec. 1893 — WPHC 4, 27/1894; 7 Aug. 1894 — *ibid.*, 198/1894; 19 Jan. 1895 — *ibid.*, 41/1895.
10. Swayne to Thurston, 7 Aug. 1894 — *ibid.*, 198/1894; 19 Jan. 1895 — *ibid.*, 41/1895; Swayne to Berkeley, 1 July 1895 — *ibid.*, 215/1895; 17 Sept. 1895 — *ibid.*, 369/1895.
11. Swayne to Berkeley, 7 July 1895 — *ibid.*, 216/1895.
12. Swayne to Berkeley, 1 Sept. 1895 — *ibid.*, 367/1895.
13. David, *Funafuti*, 118-9.
14. Swayne to Thurston, 21 Dec. 1893 — WPHC 4, 22/1894; 25 Jan. 1895 — *ibid.*, 46/1895; Swayne to Berkeley, 7 July 1895 — *ibid.*, 216/1895.
15. Swayne to Thurston, 19 Jan. 1895 — *ibid.*, 41/1895; 25 Jan. 1895 — *ibid.*, 45/1895; 4 April 1895 — *ibid.*, 201/1895; Swayne to Berkeley, 1 July 1895 — *ibid.*, 215/1895; 14 Nov. 1895 — *ibid.*, 383/1895; 18 Nov. 1895 — *ibid.*, 384/1895.
16. Swayne to Thurston, 5 June 1894 — *ibid.*, 165/1894.
17. MacGregor, *Diary*, 9 Dec. 1890, 20 Jan. 1891, 11 June 1891 — National Library of Australia; Campbell to Thurston, 10 Aug. 1893 (encl. reference from MacGregor) — WPHC 4, 183/1893; 11 March 1895 — *ibid.*, 125/1895.
18. Campbell to Berkeley, 9 Jan. 1896 — *ibid.*, 79/1896; Campbell to Thurston, n.d. [May 1896?] — *ibid.*, 214/1896; 3 September 1896 — *ibid.*, 388/1896; 3 Oct. 1896 — *ibid.*, 391/1896; 15 Dec. 1896 — *ibid.*, 68/1897; 2 Jan. 1897 — *ibid.*, 76/1897; Campbell to O'Brien, 3 May 1897 — *ibid.*, 266/1897.

19. Mahaffy to Major, 11 March 1909, encl. in Major to CO, 10 July 1909 — CO 225/86; see also Murdoch to Campbell, 18 Oct. 1900, encl. in Campbell to O'Brien, 24 Jan. 1901 — WPHC 4, 50/1901.
20. Campbell to im Thurn, 11 Nov. 1909 — *ibid.*, 28/1908.
21. Walkup to Bingham, 26 May 1896, in *The Friend*, LIV (1896), 54.
22. Walkup, 'Gilbert Islands Report for 1900', in *The Friend*, LIX (1901), 103.
23. Walkup to Smith, 17 July 1896 — ABCFM Papers, XIII.
24. Mahaffy to Major, 11 March 1909, encl. in Major to CO, 10 July 1909 — CO 225/86.
25. See correspondence and minutes in WPHC 4, 209/1896, 76/1897, 403/1897, 463/1897, 355/1898.
26. Potts to WPHC, 29 June 1896 — *ibid.*, 205/1896; see also minutes and correspondence in WPHC 4, 357/1898.
27. Campbell to O'Brien, 13 June 1899 — WPHC 4, 335/1898.
28. Cogswell to Major, 20 June 1904, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 192/1898; Mahaffy to Major, 23 March 1909 — *ibid.*, 393/1909.
29. Im Thurn to CO, 17 May 1906 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State.
30. Campbell to im Thurn, 11 Nov. 1907 — WPHC 4, 28/1908.
31. Campbell to O'Brien, 3 May 1897 — *ibid.*, 266/1897; 10 May 1897 — *ibid.*, 415/1897; 16 July 1897 — *ibid.*, 413/1897.
32. See, for example, letter from 'Britisher' [Potts], *Truth* (Australia), 10 March 1901; *The Daily Chronicle*, 13 Dec. 1906; *Fiji Times*, 22 Sept. 1909; *Western Pacific Herald*, 30 Oct. 1909. For a copy of Addington's report of inquiry see CO to Allardyce, 1 Jan. 1902, with enclosure — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State.
33. Campbell to Berkeley, 29 Jan. 1896 — WPHC 4, 83/1896; Campbell to O'Brien, 10 Jan. 1900 — *ibid.*, 185/1899; Campbell to Thurston, 15 Dec. 1896 — *ibid.*, 68/1897.
34. Goward to Thompson, 17 April 1902, 22 Dec. 1902 — SSL.
35. Goward to Thompson, 23 Feb. 1901 — *ibid.*
36. Walkup to Smith, 21 Nov. 1900 — ABCFM Papers, XVII. For a statement of Campbell's general views see Campbell to Thompson, 6 July 1906 — SSL.
37. Walkup to Smith, 21 Nov. 1900 — ABCFM Papers, XVII; Campbell to Berkeley, 7 May 1896 — WPHC 4, 212/1896; Campbell to O'Brien, 13 March 1898, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 192/1898.
38. Campbell to Berkeley, 7 May 1896 — *ibid.*, 212/1896.
39. Cogswell to Major, 20 June 1904 — *ibid.*, 192/1898.
40. Queen's Regulation No. 3 of 1893; the 'Distance Regulation' was imposed by island governments at the behest of Campbell.
41. Swayne to King, 29 Jan. 1899 — WPHC 4, 22/1899.
42. King's Regulation No. 3 of 1904; see also related correspondence in WPHC 4, 192/1898; [Merg], *Mémoire du Modus Vivendi*.
43. Jackson to CO, 29 June 1904, encl. in CO to im Thurn, 3 Aug. 1904 — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State.
44. Merg to Jackson, 19 March 1904 — WPHC 4, 192/1898.
45. Campbell to im Thurn, 16 Sept. 1905 — *ibid.*
46. Campbell to im Thurn, 28 Oct. 1904 — *ibid.*
47. Im Thurn to Campbell, 22 March 1905 — WPHC, Despatches to Resident Commissioner; Mahaffy to Major, 27 March 1909, with enclosures — WPHC 4, 393/1909.
48. Campbell to im Thurn, 4 March 1907, 29 May 1907, 4 June 1907, 10 July 1908 — *ibid.*, 192/1898; Regulation No. 3 of 1908.
49. Im Thurn to CO, 17 May 1906 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State.
50. *ibid.*
51. Im Thurn to CO, 11 March 1908, and associated minutes — CO 225/81.
52. May to CO, 10 Jan. 1912, and subsequent correspondence — CO 225/103.

CHAPTER SIX: THE ORIGINS OF BITTERNESS

1. Maude, 'Post-Spanish Discoveries', 105-6.
2. Correspondence between Stanmore and Arundel, 1897-1904 — J.T. Arundel Papers, PMB 493.
3. Ellis, *Ocean Island and Nauru*, 52-3.
4. Ellis, Diary, 3 May 1900 — J.T. Arundel Papers, PMB 497. The agreement is to be found enclosed in Cogswell to Jackson, 12 Dec. 1903 — WPHC 4, 26/1900. The agreement was first published in Langdon, 'The Ocean Islanders'.
5. Ellis, Diary, 3 May 1900 — J.T. Arundel Papers, PMB 497.
6. H.C. and H.E. Maude, 'Social Organisation of Banaba', 265-7, 284-5; Webster, *Last Cruise of the Wanderer*, 40-1.
7. Ellis, Diary, May 1900 — J.T. Arundel Papers, PMB 497.
8. Eliot, *Broken Atoms*, 141-2.
9. Walkup, Notes [begun] 15 Feb. 1900 — ABCFM Papers, XVII.
10. Murdoch to Dickson, 12 May 1910 — WPHC 4, 491/1909.
11. Ellis, *Ocean Island and Nauru*, 56.
12. *ibid.*, 69.
13. Stanmore to CO, 4 Jan. 1900 — CO 225/60.
14. O'Brien to CO, 9 Feb. 1900 — WPHC 4, 26/1900. I am indebted to Maslyn Williams for information on Campbell's relationship with the Company.
15. O'Brien to CO, 24 April 1901 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State; Ellis, Diary, 5 May 1900 — J.T. Arundel Papers, PMB 497; see also correspondence in CO 225/60.
16. Stanmore to Selborne, 10 Aug. 1900, Minute by Anderson — CO 225/60, Tupper to CO, Nov. 1900 — RNAS 45.
17. Proclamation of 28 Nov. 1900; Queen's Regulation No. 2 of 1900; Minute by Campbell, 8 Feb. 1900 and subsequent correspondence in WPHC 4, 26/1900.
18. Pacific Islands Company to CO, 12 March, 17 May, 6 June 1901; CO to Pacific Islands Company, 4 April, 5 June 1901 — CO 225/62.
19. Correspondence between Stanmore and Arundel, 1901-2 — J.T. Arundel Papers, PMB 497; *Prospectus for the Sale of German-owned Shares in the Pacific Phosphate Company*, 26 July 1917 — Pacific Islands Company and Pacific Phosphate Company, Miscellaneous Printed Papers, PMB Doc. 99.
20. See, for example, *The Daily Chronicle*, 13 Dec. 1906; *Fiji Times*, 22 Sept. 1909; *Western Pacific Herald*, 30 Oct. 1909; and copies of parliamentary exchanges in WPHC 4, 491/1909; 1012/1909. There was a revival of parliamentary interest in 1913-14 — see WPHC 4, 851/1914, 2108/1914, 2118/1914.
21. Pacific Phosphate Company to CO, 15 April 1902 — CO 225/64; Regulation No. 1 of 1903.
22. Cogswell to Jackson, 12 Dec. 1903 — WPHC 4, 26/1900; Jackson to Cogswell, 7 Jan. 1904 — WPHC, Despatches to Resident Commissioner; Campbell as quoted in Major to CO, 26 Nov. 1910 — CO 225/92.
23. Pacific Phosphate Company to CO, 9 Nov. 1909, encl. in CO to im Thurn, 25 Nov. 1909 — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State.
24. Pacific Phosphate Company to CO, 29 Dec. 1904 — CO 225/67; Campbell to im Thurn, 5 Sept. 1905 — WPHC 4, 26/1900; correspondence and minutes in WPHC 4, 203/1905; im Thurn to CO, 3 Feb. 1908, 26 Aug. 1908, WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State.
25. Dickson to im Thurn, 10 Dec. 1909, 14 Dec. 1909 — WPHC 4, 491/1909.
26. CO to May, 20 June 1911 — *ibid.*
27. Dickson to May, 24 Nov. 1911 — *ibid.*
28. May to CO, Tel., 25 May 1911 — *ibid.*
29. May to Dickson, 15 Aug. 1911, Dickson to May, 15 Sept. 1911 — *ibid.*; CO to Sweet-Escott, Tel., 24 Dec. 1912 — *ibid.*, 2351/1912.
30. Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 22 Dec. 1913 — *ibid.*, 154/1914.

31. CO to Pacific Phosphate Company, 14 March 1913; Pacific Phosphate Company to CO, 23 April 1913—CO Confidential Print, Australian No. 228, Items 2, 14, 18; Agreement in GEIC 2A, 167/3/1.
32. Reilly to Eliot, 13 June 1914, encl. in Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 25 June 1914 — WPHC 4, 1771/1914.
33. CO to Sweet-Escott, 7 April 1914 — *ibid.*, 1203/1914.
34. Ellis to Eliot, 3 Jan. 1914, encl. in Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 6 Jan. 1914 — *ibid.*, 350/1914.
35. Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 2 Jan. 1914 — *ibid.*, 348/1914; Workman to Sweet-Escott, 11 Nov. 1915 — *ibid.*, 3213/1915; Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 26 Feb. 1917 — *ibid.*, 1030/1917.
36. Minute by Vaskess, 14 Sept. 1914 — *ibid.*, 2106/1914; Statement of Prices by Turnbull to Murdoch, 25 Feb. 1910, *ibid.*, 491/1909; Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 11 Nov. 1915 — *ibid.*, 3213/1915; Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 26 Feb. 1917 — *ibid.*, 1030/1917.
37. Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 28 July 1917 — *ibid.*, 2504/1917; see also CO to Sweet-Escott, 1 March 1916, with enclosures — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State, CO to Sweet-Escott, 25 Aug. 1916, with enclosures — WPHC 4, 2639/1916.
38. See Ellis, *Ocean Island and Nauru*, 180-3; Williams, *Three Islands*, 38-43; CO to Rodwell, 6 March 1920, with enclosures — WPHC 4, 184/1920.
39. BPC to Rodwell, 21 Sept. 1921 — *ibid.*, 2472/1921.
40. McClure to Rodwell, Tel., 30 Oct. 1923 — *ibid.*, 2532/1923.
41. Rodwell to CO, Tel., 9 Dec. 1923 — *ibid.*, 3054/1923.
42. CO to Rodwell, Tel., 13 Dec. 1923 — *ibid.*
43. McClure to Rodwell, 26 Nov. 1923 — *ibid.*, 89/1924.
44. Memo. by Hutson, 15 July 1925, and subsequent correspondence — *ibid.*, 1916/1925.
45. Grimble to Hutson, 25 Aug. 1927, and subsequent correspondence — *ibid.*, 2566/1927.
46. For a fuller discussion of Grimble's character and career in the Colony see Macdonald, 'Grimble of the Gilbert Islands'.
47. CO to Hutson, Tel., 21 Dec. 1926; Grimble to Hutson, Tel., 21 March 1927 — WPHC 4, 3703/1926.
48. Grimble to Hutson, 6 July 1927 — *ibid.*, 1824/1927.
49. CO to Hutson, Tel., 14 July 1927 — *ibid.*
50. Grimble to Hutson, Tel., 25 July 1927 — *ibid.*, 1875/1927.
51. Grimble, 'Diary of Negotiations', encl. in Grimble to Hutson, 25 Aug. 1927, 14 Nov. 1927, entry for 25 Aug. 1927 — *ibid.*, 2566/1927.
52. *ibid.*, entry for 30 Aug. 1927.
53. *ibid.*, entry for 8 Aug. 1927.
54. *ibid.*, entry for 29 July 1927 and *Law Reports, Chancery Division*, 1977, 159-60.
55. Grimble, 'Diary of Negotiations', entry for 10 Sept. 1927 — WPHC 4, 2566/1927; see also Silverman, *Disconcerting Issue*, 122-8, for a reconstruction from Banaban sources.
56. CO to Hutson, Tel., 23 Nov. 1927 — WPHC 4, 3357/1927.
57. McClure to Rodwell, 26 Nov. 1923 — *ibid.*, 89/1924.
58. Grimble to Hutson, Tel. 2 Aug. 1927 — *ibid.*, 1875/1927.
59. Grimble to Hutson, Tel., 3 Oct. 1927 — *ibid.*, 2742/1927.
60. Neill to Fletcher, 31 Jan. 1931 — *ibid.*, 735/1931.
61. Memo. by Vaskess, 27 Sept. 1941 — GEIC 2, 53/2/1.
62. Rotan Tito to Secretary of State, 8 Aug. 1932, encl. in CO to Fletcher, 8 April 1933 — WPHC 4, 1561/1933.
63. Barley to Seymour, 8 June 1934, with enclosures — *ibid.*
64. Memo. by Vaskess, 27 Sept. 1941 — GEIC 2, 53/2/1.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPERIAL POLICY AND THE PHOSPHATE INDUSTRY

1. MacDermot to Mahaffy, 11 Feb. 1911 — WPHC 4, 203/1905.

2. Mahaffy to May, 11 Sept. 1911 — *ibid.* 1567/1911.
3. May to CO, 4 April 1912 — CO 225/104.
4. Minutes on May to CO, 14 March 1912 — *ibid.*
5. Minutes and draft on May to CO, 14 March 1912 — *ibid.*; May to Dickson, 5 Aug. 1911; Dickson to May, 15 Sept. 1911 — WPHC 4, 491/1909; CO to Sweet-Escott, Tel., 24 Dec. 1912 — *ibid.*, 2351/1912.
6. Eliot, *Broken Atoms*, 145; H.E. Maude, personal communication.
7. CO to im Thurn, 3 June 1908 — *ibid.*, 203/1905; 2 June 1910 — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State.
8. GEIC, *Colony Annual Report*, 1949-72 (History sections); CO to Hutson, 18 Nov. 1915 — WPHC 4, 180/1916.
9. CO to Major, 5 July 1912 — *ibid.*, 1865/1912; Dickson to Sweet-Escott, 12 Sept., 1912 — *ibid.*; Dickson to Sweet-Escott, 9 Nov. 1912 and minute by Hart-Davies 2 Jan. 1913 — *ibid.*, 2389/1912; Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 12 Nov. 1913 — *ibid.*, 2366/1913.
10. Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 8 April 1914 — *ibid.*, 1261/1914.
11. See, in particular, minutes and correspondence in WPHC 4, 203/1905; also im Thurn to CO, 3 Feb. 1908 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State; CO to im Thurn, 28 Aug. 1908 — WPHC, Despatches from Secretary of State.
12. MacDermot to Dickson, 7 Aug. 1912, enclosed in Dickson to Sweet-Escott, 22 Nov. 1912 — WPHC 4, 2393/1912.
13. MacDermot to Sweet-Escott, 31 Dec. 1912 — *ibid.*, 730/1913.
14. See Ellis, *Ocean Island and Nauru*, 180-3; Viviani, *Nauru: Phosphate and Political Progress*, 40-8; Williams, *Three Islands*, 38-43; CO to Rodwell, 6 March 1920, with enclosures — WPHC 4, 864/1920.
15. CO to Rodwell, 5 May 1922, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 1551/1922.
16. Smith-Rewse to Rodwell, 12 Feb. 1923, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 449/1923.
17. CO to Rodwell, 15 Feb. 1923, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 935/1923.
18. Note by Fell on discussions with Ellis and Pope, 26 Sept. 1921 — *ibid.*, 2473/1921.
19. CO to Rodwell, Tel., 24 July 1923; 7 Aug. 1923 — *ibid.*, 1769/1923; McClure to Rodwell, 8 Sept. 1923 — *ibid.*, 2345/1923; GEIC, *Colony Annual Report*, 1923-4, 1924-6.
20. CO to Sweet-Escott, 23 Feb. 1914 — WPHC 4, 695/1914; Rodwell to Eliot, Tel., 7 April 1920 — *ibid.*, 703/1920; Barley to Barton, Tel., 13 July 1936 — *ibid.*, 2175/1936.
21. Dickson to May, 4 Oct. 1911 and subsequent correspondence in WPHC 4, 970/1910; Workman to Sweet-Escott, 17 Oct. 1916 — *ibid.*, 3098/1916; Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 1 Nov. 1917 — *ibid.*, 3184/1917; Eliot to Rodwell, 2 Dec. 1919 — *ibid.*, 133/1920; 31 Dec. 1919 — *ibid.*, 577/1920; Grimble to Fletcher, 25 June 1931 — *ibid.*, 1390/1931.
22. Grimble to Rodwell, 24 June 1920 — *ibid.*, 703/1920.
23. Bruce to Rodwell, 13 Nov. 1920 — *ibid.*, 3092/1920.
24. Grimble to Hutson, 10 Dec. 1925 — *ibid.*, 3039/1925; Pilling to Hutson, 5 Jan. 1926 — *ibid.*, 173/1926.
25. Grimble to Fletcher, 25 June 1931 — *ibid.*, 1390/1931.
26. Grimble to Fletcher, 12 March 1930 — *ibid.*, 1120/1930.
27. See 'Conference with Representatives of British Phosphate Commissioners', 27 Sept. 1930 — *ibid.*, 1387/1930; Grimble to Fletcher, 18 Dec. 1930 — *ibid.*, 217/1931; 'Notes of discussion at Interview granted by His Excellency the High Commissioner to the British Phosphate Commission Representatives at Suva on 6 July 1932' — *ibid.*, 1623/1932; and see all minutes and correspondence in WPHC 4, 1884/1932.
28. Richards to CO, 19 March 1937 — *ibid.*, 531/1935.
29. Richards to Dawe (CO), 1 Aug. 1937, copy enclosed in Luke to Parkinson (CO), 27, July 1939 — WPHC 4 (Confidential and Secret Minute Papers), 2585/1939.
30. *ibid.*, and see Luke to Barley, Tel., 7 Aug. 1941, and subsequent correspondence WPHC 5, 95/1941.
31. Richards to CO, 19 March 1937 and subsequent correspondence — WPHC 4, 531/1935.

32. Luke to Parkinson (CO), 27 July 1939 — WPHC 4 (Confidential and Secret Minute Papers), 2585/1939.

CHAPTER EIGHT: RIGIDITY AND REFORM

1. im Thurn to CO, 3 Feb. 1908 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State; CO to Major, 10 April 1909, with enclosures — WPHC 4, 482/1909; CO to im Thurn, 14 Oct. 1909, 6 April 1910 — *ibid.*; May to CO, 17 Oct. 1911 — WPHC, Despatches to Secretary of State; Dickson to Major, 4 July 1912 — WPHC 4, 1508/1912; Murdoch to Sweet-Escott, 10 April 1913 — *ibid.*, 925/1913; 29 Sept. 1913 — *ibid.*, 1918/1913; District Annual Report for the Ellice Islands, 1921-2, enclosed in McClure to Rodwell, 17 Nov. 1922 — *ibid.*, 3510/1922.
2. Dickson to Sweet-Escott, 5 Sept. 1912, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 1852/1912; Ordinance No. 2 of 1917.
3. District Annual Reports for 1929-30 — WPHC 4, 86/1931.
4. Swinbourne to Seymour, 1 Feb. 1933 — *ibid.*, 783/1933.
5. Grimble to Seymour, 18 Feb. 1928 — *ibid.*, 939/1928; GEIC, *Regulations for the Good Order and Cleanliness of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands*, 1930.
6. Minute by Young — WPHC 4, 939/1928.
7. Grimble to Fletcher, 17 Jan. 1930 — *ibid.*
8. Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 21 Feb. 1918 and subsequent correspondence in WPHC 4, 869/1918; Eliot to Rodwell, 11 Dec. 1918, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 272/1919.
9. The official records relating to the incident are to be found in WPHC 4, 2435/1930 and those of the subsequent trials in WPHC 4, 728/1931, 730/1931. For a comprehensive account which draws on these records as well as personal recollections see Maude, 'Swords of Gabriel'.
10. Maude, 'Swords of Gabriel', 126.
11. See Eliot to Rodwell, 2 Nov. 1918 — WPHC 4, 170/1919; 6 Nov. 1918 — *ibid.*, 173/1919.
12. Grimble to Eliot, 20 Nov. 1918, encl. in Eliot to Rodwell, 1 Feb. 1919 — *ibid.*, 531/1919.
13. Grimble To Eliot, 3 Feb. 1919, encl. in Eliot to Rodwell, 8 Sept. 1919 — *ibid.*, 1865/1919.
14. Eastman to Eliot, 4 Aug. 1919, encl. in Eliot to Rodwell, 8 Sept. 1919 — *ibid.*
15. Workman to Sweet-Escott, 29 Aug. 1916 — *ibid.*, 2547/1916.
16. Burrows to Anderson, 18 Aug. 1921 — *ibid.*, 3258/1921.
17. McClure to Rodwell, 11 July 1923, 24 Oct. 1923, with enclosures — *ibid.*, 2049/1923.
18. Grimble to Hutson, 20 Dec. 1926 — *ibid.*, 179/1927.
19. Barradale to CO, 11 July 1925, encl. in CO to Hutson, 5 Aug. 1925 — *ibid.*, 1807/1925.
20. GEIC, *Education Department Report*, 1924-36.
21. GEIC, *Education Department Report*, 1931, Appendix I; Koch (ed.), *Logs in the Current of the Sea*, 5-9.
22. Grimble to Fletcher, 17 Dec. 1931 — WPHC 4, 222/1932.
23. *ibid.*
24. Langdon, 'Harry Maude: Shy Pro-consul'.
25. GEIC, *Instructions and Hints to District Officers* (Grimble and Clark), 1929; Maude to Garvey, 5 Dec. 1938, encl. in Garvey to Luke, 13 Dec. 1938 — WPHC 9, F10/12(I).
26. H.E. Maude, personal communication; Barley to Barton, 7 June 1936 — WPHC 4, 1407/1936; GEIC, *Gilbert Islands, Island Regulations*, 1939.
27. Barley to Richards, 10 Feb. 1938, with enclosures — WPHC 4, 1407/1936.
28. District Annual Report for the Ellice Islands (Kennedy), encl. in Barley to Barton, 12 Sept. 1936 — *ibid.*, 744/1936; Kennedy to Barley, 3 April 1937, encl. in Barley to Barton, 13 Sept. 1937 — *ibid.*, 1407/1936; GEIC, *Ellice Islands, Island Regulations*, 1947.
29. Barley to Seymour, 8 June 1934 and enclosure by Kennedy 'Memorandum on Native Magistrates in the Ellice Islands' — WPHC 4, 1653/1933; Minutes of Discussion between Barley and Richards, 6-7 June 1938 — WPHC 9, F10/12 (I).

30. District Annual Report for the Tarawa District (Grimble), encl. in Eliot to Sweet-Escott, 21 Feb. 1917—WPHC 4, 1027/1917.
31. H.E. Maude, personal communication.
32. See Maude, *Report . . . on [the] Colonization of the Phoenix Islands*; Maude, 'Colonization of the Phoenix Islands'; Bedford, *Resettlement*.
33. Wallin to Burns Philp, 30 Jan. 1910—South Seas General: Reports on the Gilbert, Marshall and Ellice Islands by F. Wallin—Burns Philp Archives.
34. Maude, *Co-operative Movement*.

CHAPTER NINE: THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND BEYOND

1. The best single account of the Gilbert Islands during the war years is to be found in Wernham's 'Gilbert Islands District Combined Annual Report for the Years 1943 and 1944'—GEIC 2, F3/1/3. Many undocumented comments in this chapter are based on interviews conducted in 1969.
2. For a general account of coastwatching in the Gilbert Islands see Gillespie, *New Zealand in the Second World War*, 228-37.
3. Basil Were, 'Prisoner of War Experience'—WA II, 447.364/1 (National Archives of New Zealand).
4. 'Experience of J.M. Menzies and his brother M. Menzies as prisoners-of-war of the Japanese, 1941-1945'—WAIL, 541.364/1 (National Archives of New Zealand); *Among Those Present*, 82.
5. *Among Those Present*, 82; Morison, *Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Action*, 235-41.
6. Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 62-4.
7. GEIC 21, F 12/4/4.
8. Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls*, 77; Basil Were, 'Prisoner of War Experiences'—WA II, 447.364/1 (National Archives of New Zealand).
9. In this sense the term was coined by Rear Admiral Forrest P. Sherman who applied it to the Japanese-occupied Marshall Islands—see Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, 112.
10. GEIC 17, F 16/2/1.
11. 'Cumulative Interrogation of B.T. Nabetari'—*ibid*; see also Ellis, *Mid-Pacific Outposts*, 144-9.
12. GEIC 17, F 16/7/1; see also Ellis, *Mid-Pacific Outposts*, 244-50; *Pacific Islands Monthly*, May 1946, 13; July 1966, 81-4.
13. Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls*, 78-9; Chambers, *Nanumea Report*, 53-4.
14. Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls*, 97.
15. For general accounts of the 'Makin' campaign see Morison, *ibid.*, 121-45; Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 75-126.
16. Morison, *ibid.*, 132.
17. Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, 127-8.
18. The account that follows has been drawn primarily from the standard sources: Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls*; Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*; Isley and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*. For detailed accounts of the fighting at Tarawa see the classic by the journalist Sherrod, *Tarawa: The Story of a Battle*; also Shaw, *Tarawa: a Legend is Born*, and (an official Marine history), Stockman, *Battle for Tarawa*.
19. Holland, War Diary—GEIC 21, F12/4/6. On the state of tidal information see Isley and Crowl, *U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, 210-12.
20. Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, 119-20.
21. *ibid.*, 112-13; for troop numbers see Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls*, 148-9, 185.
22. Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts and Marshalls*, 157.
23. Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, 125.
24. *ibid.*, 130.
25. *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1943.
26. Smith and Finch, *Coral and Brass*, 111.

27. *New York Times*, 1 Dec. 1943.
28. See Holland, War Diary—GEIC 21, F12/4/6; 'Gilbert Islands District Combined Annual Report for the Years 1943 and 1944'—GEIC 2, F3/1/3; also various island reports from the Victoria University Rural Socio-Economic Survey; Chambers, *Nanumea Report*, 53-4, Sewell, *Butaritari Report*, 8-9; Watters with Banibati, *Abemama Report*, 9-11.
29. 'Report on events Nov. 1943-Jan. 1944'—GEIC 21, F12/2/2.
30. *ibid.*; 'Gilbert Islands District Combined Annual Report for 1943 and 1944'—GEIC 2, F3/1/3.
31. Mitchell to CO, Tel., 23 July 1943—GEIC 1, F2/1/2.
32. Mitchell to CO, 30 Sept. 1943—GEIC 8, F2/1.
33. *ibid.*; see also Mitchell, *Policy and Administration after the War*.
34. Grantham, Minute, 2 March 1945—Copy in GEIC 1, F2/1/2.
35. Maude, *Memorandum on Post-War Reorganisation*.
36. Mitchell, *Policy and Administration after the War*, 4.
37. GEIC, *Ten Year Plan of Reconstruction and Development and Welfare*, 1946. After the war the Colony adopted Australian currency; for convenience of reference, pre-decimalisation figures have been converted.
38. On Banaban resettlement see Silverman, *Disconcerting Issue*.
39. Maude's views are most clearly expressed in his *Report . . . on Colonization of the Phoenix Islands*.
40. See GEIC 2, F48/4/5.

CHAPTER TEN: POLICIES FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE

1. Many of the comments in this chapter are based on my own observations or on discussions with colonial officials and cannot, therefore, be documented. This chapter is primarily concerned with developments between 1945 and self-government in 1977; where appropriate, however, some comments are written in the present tense.
2. GEIC, *Estimates; Colony Annual Report*.
3. Hughes, 'Political Economy of Nauru'; Viviani, *Nauru: Phosphate and Political Progress*, 159-77.
4. GEIC, *Estimates; Colony Annual Report*. Unless otherwise stated information relating to revenue and expenditure has been drawn from these series and will not be further documented. More explicit figures and tables appear in Macdonald, *Policy and Practice*, 125-38.
5. GEIC, *Report on Education in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony*, 1945; Maude, *Memorandum on Post-War Reorganisation*, 16-20.
6. For developments over this period see GEIC, Education Department, *Annual Reports*.
7. Stanley to CO, 2 March 1954—GEIC 2, F32/1.
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17. On remittances at this time see Couper, 'Regional Trading Anomalies'.
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25. Mooring *et al*, *Socio-Economic Survey*, 1968, 23.
26. GEIC, *Draft Development Plan, 1970-1972*.
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34. See GEIC, *Development Plan, 1973-1976: First Annual Review*.

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2. WPHC 9, F10/12(I).
3. On the working of the 1941 Ordinance see DO, GID to Sec. to Govt., 16 Dec. 1949—GEIC 2, F10/1/1.
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20. Unless otherwise stated the comments that follow are based largely on my discussions with District Officers, Island Councillors and Island Executive Officers in 1969-70. For Government views of the problems associated with the new legislation see GEIC 2A, F113/1/1.
21. See GEIC 2A, F113/1/7.
22. See GEIC 2A, F113/9/1.
23. See GEIC 2A, F151/2/7; GEIC, House of Representatives, *Minutes*, 2nd Session, 2nd Meeting, 26-7.
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27. The discussion that follows is based on field research at Nonouti in 1969 and subsequent interviews at Tarawa in 1970, 1973-4, 1976 and 1981. For a fuller account see Macdonald, *'Te Reitaki n Nonouti'*.
28. Sewell, *Butaritari Report*, 136-51.

CHAPTER TWELVE: MODERN LIFESTYLES

1. In up-dating and extending my own impressions I have made considerable use of the findings of the Victoria University of Wellington Rural Socio-Economic Survey commissioned by the Government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. See Geddes, *North Tabiteuea Report*; Chambers, *Nanumea Report*; Sewell, *Butaritari Report*; Lawrence, *Tamana Report*; Watters with Banibati, *Abemama Report*, and the team's general report—*Rural Socio-Economic Change*; see also Knudson, 'Adaptational Persistence'.
2. See GEIC, *Report on the Census*, 1973, Tables 2, 5, 39, 40.
3. Detailed production figures supplied by GEIC, Department of Agriculture; the conclusions are confirmed in the reports cited in Note 1 above.
4. Sewell, *Butaritari Report*, 65-6.
5. Dommen, *The Incidence of Taxation*, 1975, 2-8.
6. Chambers, *Nanumea Report*, 131-4.
7. Information supplied by Gilbert Islands Planning Office, Tarawa, 1976.
8. Dommen, *The Incidence of Taxation*, 2-8; Chambers, *Nanumea Report*, 128-38.
9. Chambers, *Nanumea Report*, 136.
10. Sewell, *Butaritari Report*, 89.
11. See case studies in Geddes, *North Tabiteuea Report*, 94-100; Lawrence, *Tamana Report*, 167-73; Sewell, *Butaritari Report*, 98-105.
12. GEIC, *Report on the Census*, 1973, Table 14.
13. *ibid.*, Table 10.
14. *ibid.*, Table 1.
15. *ibid.*, Tables 39, 40.
16. The control of inter-island migration by a permit system was first introduced by the Native Passengers Ordinance No. 1 of 1900, and subsequently carried forward by Ordinances No. 3 of 1908, 17 of 1917, and 1 of 1929. Maude had the Ordinance repealed in 1940 as part of his revision of the Island Regulations (Ordinance No. 5 of 1940).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: TOWARDS SELF-GOVERNMENT

1. For general discussions of the emergence of the modern Commonwealth see Mansergh, *Commonwealth Experience*; McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*.
2. Many of the comments in this chapter are based on interviews with participants—official and unofficial, European and Islander—and my own observations of the workings of the House of Representatives, Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly. I was also able to consult a number of government papers on the subject on the condition that sources would not be cited.
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4. *ibid.*, 1960, 14-21.
5. *ibid.*, 1962, 22-5.
6. Brief for Conference of Administrative Officers, Oct. 1962—GEIC 2, F10/5/6.
7. Andersen to Trench, Draft Despatch June 1962—*ibid.*
8. Minutes of Discussions, 23 July 1962—*ibid.*
9. GEIC, Advisory Council, *Minutes*, First Meeting, 48-58.
10. *ibid.*, Third Meeting, 25.
11. *ibid.*, Fourth Meeting, 92-101.
12. *Colony Information Notes*, 21 Oct. 1965, 25 Nov. 1965; Gilbertese National Party, *Constitution*, 1965.
13. GEIC, Advisory Council, *Minutes*, Fifth Meeting, 41, 67.
14. *Colony Information Note*, 2 Dec. 1965; Christian Democratic Party, *Constitution*, 1965.

15. GEIC, Advisory Council, *Minutes*, Fourth Meeting, 3, 25-33.
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17. GEIC, Advisory Council, *Minutes*, Seventh Meeting, 2.
18. *ibid.*, 60.
19. Gilbertese National Party, 'Proposals & Amendments on the Constitution', c. July 1966—GEIC 2, F10/5/17.
20. GEIC, Advisory Council, *Minutes*, Seventh Meeting, 62-7.
21. *ibid.*, 73-5.
22. GEIC, Advisory Council, *Report of a Select Committee . . . on the Constitution*, 1966; the workings of the Committee and Bell's role are covered in GEIC 2, F107/1/21.
23. GEIC, House of Representatives, *Minutes*, First Session, Second Meeting, 71-2. (See also Second Session, Third Meeting, 30-32, 40-41.)
24. *ibid.*, Third Session, Third Meeting, 89-90.
25. *ibid.*, 84.
26. *ibid.*, 113-20.
27. *ibid.*, Second Session, First Meeting, 23.
28. GEIC, Treasury File, Colonial Development and Welfare, Annual Audited Statements.
29. GEIC, House of Representatives, *Minutes*, First Session, First Meeting, 41-2.
30. *ibid.*, Second Session, Second Meeting, 12-15; Second Session, Third Meeting, 107-9.
31. *ibid.*, Third Session, Third Meeting, 85-90.
32. GEIC, House of Representatives, *Note for Informal Discussions on Constitutional Affairs*, May 1969; *Minutes of Informal Discussions on Constitutional Affairs*, May 1969.
33. GEIC, House of Representatives, *Summary of Proposals for the Amendment of the Constitution of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony*, Sept. 1969.
34. GEIC, House of Representatives, *Report of a Select Committee Appointed to Consider and Make Recommendations on Constitutional Development*, Feb. 1970, 31.
35. *ibid.*, 8-11.
36. GEIC, House of Representatives, *Minutes*, Third Session, First Meeting, 78-9.
37. *ibid.*, Third Session, Second Meeting, 39-53.
38. *Colony Information Notes*, 25 March 1971.
39. GEIC, Legislative Council, *Report*, First Session, Third Meeting, 222-3.
40. This issue is discussed in detail in the next chapter.
41. Home to Field, 21 April 1972—reprinted in GEIC, Legislative Council, *Report*, Second Session, Second Meeting, 89.
42. *ibid.*, 152-3.
43. *ibid.*, Third Session, First Meeting, 195-202.
44. *ibid.*, Third Session, Second Meeting, 232-43, 306-26.
45. *ibid.*, 20-1.
46. GEIC, Legislative Council, *Report of the Select Committee Appointed . . . to Review the Operation of the Constitution and to make Recommendations for Changes*, May 1973.
47. GEIC, *Report: General Election 1974*.
48. The Botaki ni Karikarakea Aroia Taani Makuri (Union for the Improvement of Workers), known locally as BKATM. Details of the strike can be found in *Atoll Pioneer*, 28 Feb., 7 March, 18 April 1974.
49. See GEIC, *A National Defence Force for the Gilbert Islands*, March 1976.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

1. Much of the material included here was first published as Macdonald, 'Secession in the Defence of Identity'. Where I have drawn on background material from earlier chapters this has not been documented again here. Most of the information in this chapter has been drawn from field research notes compiled between 1969 and 1977, and from official records which were made available on the understanding that specific references would not be cited.

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5. GEIC, *Civil List*, 1964, 1965.
6. GEIC, Advisory Council, *Minutes*, Fourth Meeting, 92.
7. *ibid.*, Second Meeting, 44; Third Meeting, 36, 64, 69, 83.
8. *ibid.*, Fourth Meeting, 83.
9. GEIC, House of Representatives, *Minutes*, Second Session, Third Meeting, 84-5.
10. GEIC, *Colony Information Notes*, 10 Oct., 14, 21, 28 Nov., 12 Dec. 1969.
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13. GEIC [Field], *Future of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands*, 1972.
14. United Nations, *Report of the . . . Visiting Mission*, 33.
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4. *Report of the Tuvalu Constitutional Conference, London, February 1978*—GBPP, Cmnd. 7144.
5. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Dec. 1975, 15, 82.
6. See Viviani, *Nauru: Phosphate and Political Progress*.
7. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, Jan. 1977, 16; Oct. 1977, 15; *Law Reports, Chancery Division*, 1977, 341.
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9. Posnett, *Ocean Island and the Banabans: A Report to the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, [1977]. The Banabans finally accepted the *ex gratia* payment in 1981.
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13. On the election and its background see *Politics in Kiribati*.
14. *Atoll Pioneer*, 24 Aug. 1978.
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Note:

1. I must apologise to readers for a lack of documentation at some points in the text. During the research upon which this book is based I was granted privileged access to many official records on condition that some of these would not be cited; others that have been cited have not yet been released for public access. It should not be assumed, therefore, that any official manuscript cited for the period since the Second World War is necessarily available to the public or to researchers. And, as is inevitable in any research dealing with modern politics, I have sometimes used information given by officials and politicians on the assumption that their anonymity would be respected.
2. This Bibliography is selective. It does not aspire to be a general listing of sources on the history of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. Series which have only been consulted briefly and have not proved a significant source of information have not been listed.

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- XIV — Pacific Islands, 1877-79
- XV — Pacific Islands, 1879-81
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Note: In former times most of those who lived in the islands that now make up Kiribati and Tuvalu had a single given name; more recently, many have adopted their father's name as a surname that is now being passed on to subsequent generations. Here, as in the period covered by this book, the practice of referring to individuals by their given names has been followed (even when the name itself may have been anglicised). Thus the Beretitenti (President) of Kiribati is listed under Ieremia Tabai, not Tabai, Ieremia. The personal prefix (Ten, Tem, etc) formerly used in Kiribati has been retained only for 19th century chiefs and follows the given name — hence Binoka, Tem, not Tem Binoka.

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