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R. Gerard Ward

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The First Chart of Southwest Fiji, 1799

At daybreak on Thursday the fifth of December 1799, crew of the *Ann and Hope* (Christopher Bentley, Master) sighted 'a very high peak resembling a Sugar Loaf',¹ not 'Laid Down in any Chart on Board But We have Reason to Believe they are part of the friendly Island[s]'.² In a letter written from Whampoa, Canton Bay on 20 January 1800, the ship's surgeon, Benjamin Carter, wrote that 'the course steered must have precipitated us on the reefs or ashore; but the Deity, who regards the lives of the meanest of his creatures, tempered the winds contrary to our vain wishes; and at dawn, on surveying the dangers we had escaped in the night our sense of his wisdom and goodness was increased. He it was, and not our prudence and foresight, that preserved our barque from a fatal contact with the rocks and shoals which lurked so near us'.³

Under the command of Captain Christopher Bentley, the *Ann and Hope* had sailed from Providence, Rhode Island, bound for 'Canton by the "Eastern Passage, round new Holland, & Norfolk Island"; he was to stop nowhere, except from absolute necessity, and to give the Cape of Good Hope, the Ile de France (Mauritius), and Bourbon (Réunion) "good births"'.⁴ Care was to be taken to avoid any vessels flying the French flag and any possible privateers. The *Ann and Hope* reached Whampoa on 19 January 1800 and, the following day, Carter wrote his report of the sighting of new lands for dispatch to New England. In doing so, he drew on his journal,⁵ which in turn drew extensively (especially for the navigational data) on the log of the *Chief Mare*,⁶ and/or that of Captain Bentley. Extracts from Captain Bentley's log were published in London in 1826⁷ and are quoted in Henderson.⁸ The wording in the logs of Bentley and Warner are almost identical, except that Warner's log identifies the islands they saw by letters A to H, as used on the

¹ Amos Warner, *Log kept on Ann and Hope*, 1798–99, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island (hereinafter RI), Microfilm Pacific Manuscripts Bureau Film PMB540. Warner was Chief Mate.

² Daniel Arnold, *Log*, kept by Daniel Arnold, Seaman, 1798–99, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence RI. Microfilm Pacific Manuscripts Bureau Film PMB769, Frames 117–220.

³ Benjamin Carter, 'Extract of a letter from the Surgeon of the ship *Ann and Hope*, Capt. Bentley, of Providence, dated "Whampoa, (Canton Bay) Jan. 20, 1800"', *Columbian Centinel*, 33 (9 Aug. 1800), 2, col. 2–3, Boston, Mass. Reprinted in R.G. Ward (ed.), *American Antiquities in the Central Pacific 1790–1870*, vol. 2 (Ridgewood NJ 1966), 365–9. For information on Benjamin Bowen Carter see R.W. Kenny, 'The Mañiten Voyage of the *Ann and Hope*', *American Neptune*, 18 (Jul. 1958), 134–6. Kenny comments that Carter was 'a natural linguist' and 'knew Latin, Greek, French, German, Dutch and Chinese' and that 'on the first voyage of the *Ann and Hope* the set out apparently, to familiarize himself with ship's navigation' and that his 'nonprofessional observations are keen, but, at times, self-consciously "cultured"'.
⁴ J.B. Hedges, *The Brouns of Providence Plantations: the nineteenth century* (Providence 1968), 91.

⁵ Benjamin Carter, *Journal of a Voyage from Providence Rhode Island ... to Canton, mss.*, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence RI.

⁶ Amos Warner, *Log*.

⁷ R.H. Laurie, *The Oriental Navigator* (London 1826).

⁸ G.C. Henderson, *The Discoverers of the Fiji Islands: Tasmann, Cook, Bligh, Wilson, Bellinghousen* (London 1933), 237–61.

chart shown here as Figure 1.⁹ Bentley's log, as quoted by Henderson, gives names to some of these islands with explanatory phrases such as 'it was named Hope Island' or 'which I call First or South Island'. Only Hope Island and Cocoa-nut Island are named on the chart. Table 1 gives the letter identification of each island as per the chart (Figure 1) and Warner, the name given by Bentley, and the Fijian name.

Of the four logs or journals, Carter's gives the most details and Arnold's the least. The following account of the sightings is that given by Carter. It contains the same navigation data as the logs of Bentley and Warner, and this presumably was copied from one of them.

Dec. 5th 1799

At day light at ½ past 4 AM saw an Island apparently the NW^W extremest in sight then a very high Peak resembling a Sugar loaf and tapering off to the S.E. to a low point which bore Ebn the Peak ENE distance to the nearest shore about 7 leagues.¹⁰ At 8 AM saw land NNE supposed to be another Island in a cloud & at ½ past 8 saw land NNW a low level Island. The first Island call A the latter B about 3 leagues distant. At 9 Bore away NW. This Island is full of trees and vast numbers of Cocoa nut trees overtopping the others and tends SEBs and NWbN. Off the SE point saw breakers 4 or 5 miles on the SW shore saw several spots of Breakers which appear to be 8 or 9 miles in length. Saw several spots white sandy beach. We coasted along the SW side of this Island at 3 leagues off Shore saw several fires, these Islands have the appearance of good fertile land. (1 Point East variation) Last sight of the Island A the Peak bore SE. We saw high land all round to the NE back of the Island B. And off the NW End of this Island lies a small Island with trees on it about 2 miles from it. At noon saw the land NWbN making high and uneven [sic]. The first land that we saw must have been in Long. 177°34'E as by lunar at 2 pm we were in Long. 176°52'E and Lat. 19°7'South.

Lat. and Long of the Islands B Long 177°12'E Lat. mid 18°33'S.

*Impiger extremos curvis metator ad Indos,
Per mare peremptum fugiens, per saxa per ignem:
Ne curas en quae stulte miraris et optas,
Discret et audire et meliori credere non sis? Heu!*¹¹

Friday Dec. 6

Moderate winds a smooth sea and pleasant though very hot weather. At 3 PM saw another Island NNW and at 4 two others smaller & further westward and soon after saw the land trending NWbN½N. Suppose it to be other Islands. They make as we suppose about 7 distinct Islands and perhaps those we passed may be nothing but a continual range of islands. Which from the first we saw and what we now see at 5 PM extend NWbN as much as 80 miles in length. At 5 PM the westernmost land which is Island F bore NNW½W making like 4 Sugar

⁹ I first saw this chart in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI, in 1966 when searching in New England libraries for logs and journals of early-19th century *bêche-de-mer* traders in Fiji. I am most grateful to the staff of the Society for help given to me in both 1966 and 2006.

¹⁰ Seven leagues equals 21 nautical miles or 39 kilometres.

¹¹ The wayward Latin spelling in Carter's journal has been corrected. I am grateful to Muriel Brookfield for identifying the quotation from Horace (*Epistulae* Q. Horatii Flacci, *Liber Primus*, *Epistula* I, lines 43–8). A translation reads:

'Eager for trade you dash off to farthest India,
Avoiding poverty with seas, shoals and flames;
Why not listen to, learn to trust, one wiser than yourself,
Cease to care for what you foolishly gaze at and crave?'

(A.S. Kline, *Poetry in Translation*. Available online at www.tonykline.co.uk [accessed 14 Feb. 2007]). The insertion of 'thee' is Carter's addition.

TABLE 1. The identification of islands on the *Ann and Hope* chart of southwest Fiji

Letter as on chart	Name given by Bentley	Fijian name
A	Hope Island	Kadavu
B	Cocoa-nut Island	Vaulele
C		Viti Levu
D		Viti Levu
F	First or South Island	Malolo
H	Second or North Island	Waya

leaves 6 leagues distant. Now in sight 17 Islands. Back or NE of these small Islands appears to be very high and a long range of mountainous land. At 8 PM the westernmost land bore North where there seems to be a termination of the main high land or large Islands where are a number of small Islands as represented in the chart we made. Pleasant weather during the night. Ship off and on under single reefed topsails and foresail. Day light at 5 AM the westernmost islands bore [sic] NNE made sail to the N. At 8 AM 18 or 19 separate Islands in sight. Back of which there is land as far as ENE very high and mountainous [sic]. At noon the Island I bore by true compass NEBE & Island H SEBE.¹² Each by Judgement 6 leagues dist at which time the ship was in lat 17°26'S Long per estim. 176°19'E Var 10°40'E.

By sailing this Easter rout [sic] our intention was to have avoided land but alas [sic] we have been precipitated into the midst of danger from which the will of the Deity not our own foresight and wisdom has extricated us. The course which we steered when we first made the land would have carried us on a dangerous reef. Indeed we made the land in the morning a beam of us. So that had we sailed 10 or 15 miles farther to the E we must have gone a shore in the night as we had no suspicion of land in this quarter. Dec. 7th. Last sight of land.

In the back of Carter's log is a page headed 'The following a/c is extracted from vol 2d p.98 of the abridgement of Cooks voyages' and this extract included the following quotation:

But the most considerable Islands that we heard of in this neighbourhood are Hanna Vavao and Feejee, each of which is larger than Tongataboo but it does not appear that any European has ever yet seen any one of them. Hanna lies two days sail N.W. from Vavao. It is said to be the largest of all these Islands. ... Feejee [sic] lies about 3 days sail from Tongataboo. It abounds with hogs dogs fowls and such fruits and roots as are to be found in any others, and is much larger than Tongataboo but not subject to its dominion as the other islands of this archipelago [i.e. Friendly Is] are.

The 'chart we made' to which Carter refers is also held by the Rhode Island Historical Society and, with the Society's permission, is published here as Figure 1. The chart is at a scale of approximately 1:740,000, and measures 47 cm by 38 cm. There is no indication as to who drew the chart, but presumably it was either Captain Bentley or Chief Mate Warner. Given that the chart uses his letter notation and only some of the names given by Bentley, Warner may have been the chart maker. The text on the map, 'A Chart of the

¹² Warner gives 'H' and 'F' for Carter's 'V' and 'H' respectively at this point and Warner's notation accords with the chart (Figure 1).

Friendly Islands; being the North Western extremity, supposed to be Hamoa, Vavao & Feejee ...' apparently relies on the information from the Cook account quoted above for identification of the islands seen. It echoes the comment made by Carter in his letter from Whampoa that the islands 'I suppose must be the north-westernmost of the Friendly Isles which were described to Capt. Cook (when at Tongataboo and Anomooka) as lying about 500 miles in a N.W. direction. The natives called them Hamoa, Vavoo, and Feejee, and described the inhabitants to be more ferocious than the other Friendly Islanders. Capt. Cook did not proceed to explore these islands, and it is probable we are the first whites to have seen them.'¹³ That the logs of Warrner and Arnold and the journal of Carter all postulate that the islands seen are part of the Friendly Islands described by Cook suggests that, although there was no chart on board the *Ann and Hope* showing islands in this vicinity, there may well have been a copy of the 'abridgement of Cooks voyages'.

The text in the medallion on the chart reads:

A CHART of the Friendly Islands; being the North Western extremity, supposed to be Hamoa, Vavao & Feejee, seen Dec. 3th 1799 in the ship Ann & Hope. C. Bently, Master. Variation 10°44' East. The land, except the small Islands, appears to be under cultivation and inclosed in many parts. These Islands appear to be very distinct and separate. H and F are the most western lands that we saw. This Cluster of islands trends in a North westerly direction. We coasted along them 120 miles sailing, NW by Compass, and suppose these Islands are first seen by us.

	Latitude	Longitude
Hope Island	19°7'S	177°34' East
Cocoanut Island	18°33'	177°12'
Island F	17°36'	176°34'
Island H	17°16'	176°34'

As Figure 2 shows, the latitudes calculated by Bentley are accurate, while the longitudes given are between 0°25' and 0°25' (c.43–60 kilometres at this latitude) too far to the west. This degree of accuracy is good in the circumstances of the voyage, and in particular given that this was the first landfall made after a non-stop voyage of 116 days from Providence, Rhode Island. The delineation of the coastlines is quite good for western Kadavu, western Vatulale, Malolo and Waya, even though the vessel was between 3 and 7 leagues (17–39 kilometres) offshore. It is much less accurate for Viti Levu. The coast of Viti Levu (C on the chart) is laid down as coming further south than in reality, and too close to Vatulale. This error is not surprising, given that when the crew saw 'high land all round the back of Island B' they were some 60 kilometres from the Viti Levu coast, and they would not have been able to see the actual shoreline. They were even further from 'the long range of mountainous land' which was visible later. It may be that the 'land NNE supposed to be another Island in a cloud', seen soon after the sighting of Kadavu and apparently represented as a separate island on the chart to the northeast of Kadavu and southeast of Vatulale, was also the high country of Viti Levu, although it may possibly represent a distant sighting of Beqa.

Carter's surmise that they were probably the first whites to see this coast and islands was apparently correct, and the chart in Figure 1 was the first map showing the western end of Kadavu, the island of Vatulale, the coast of Nadroga and the Mananuca group. One important earlier map is that made by Captain Bligh showing the tracks of his two passages through the Fijian Archipelago 'in the "Bounty's" Launch when I discovered these islands in 1789... [and] my track in the "Providence" and the

¹³[Carter], 'Extract of a letter'.

FIGURE 2: The 1799 *Ann and Hope* chart outlines compared with the modern map of southwest Fiji. Drawn by Coombs Cartography, Australian National University.

'Assistant' in 1792.¹⁴ From the Bounty's launch, Bligh had seen part of the north coast of Viti Levu and the Yasawa Group, and these are shown on his map. The latter group, however, is shown as one large island, with its southern extremity at about latitude 16°50'S, or only about halfway along the chain of the Yasawa Islands. His chart shows no indication that he 'saw down the Yasawas as far south as Waia [Wayai] Island, and also, had in view the mountain ranges of Viti Levu, lying to the south-east of Lauitoka', as is claimed by Henderson.¹⁵ Indeed, Waya lies some 67 kilometres south of the southernmost part of what represents the Yasawas in Bligh's map, while Lauitoka is about 100 kilometres south. Bligh's map does show the east and south coasts of Kadavu, seen on his second voyage, but nothing between Kadavu and the single large land mass which represented the northern half of the Yasawa Group.

An unnamed manuscript map of Fiji held in the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, RI, shows the islands of Lau and Lomaiviti and the Buia Bay area in detail. The northeast of Viti Levu is shown, as are the northern Yasawas. These last are named 'Favorite Islands', no doubt after the brig *Favorite*, whose tracks on three voyages, in September 1808, January and May 1809, and November 1810, are shown through Lau and Buia Bay. Other tracks record the passages of the *Harrington* (July 1807) and the *Sally* (November 1811). But this chart, apparently made in the *Ann and Hope*'s

¹⁴ See L. Lee, *Captain Bligh's Second Voyage to the South Sea* (London 1920), chart between pages 146 and 147, and Henderson, *The Discoverers*, 150–1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

home town at least 11 years after the sightings from Bentley's ship, shows nothing of Kadavu, southwestern Viti Levu or the Mamanuca Group and does not draw on the *Ann and Hope's* chart.

Arrowsmith's 'Chart of the Feejee Islands', published in 1814, was the first major compilation of map data for Fiji and is based in part on Bligh's charts and, according to Davidson,¹⁶ 'information collected by sandalwood traders' whose activities were mainly focused on western Vanua Levu. In 1836 surveys by HMS *Victor* resulted in modifications to the Arrowsmith chart but, even then, the Mamanuca Group does not appear, although a misplaced Vatulele is shown with the name 'Baccha-billy' and an impression is given of the Viti Levu coast lying about 30 kilometres to the northwest of its correct position.¹⁷ Dumont d'Urville had sighted Vatulele and southwest Viti Levu when he tracked from the western end of Kadavu to the west of the Mamanuca Group en route to the New Hebrides in mid-1827, and had mapped the area quite accurately,¹⁸ but apparently his French records were not used in the 1836 Arrowsmith revision. Perhaps it was not until after United States Exploring Expedition, when in May 1840 the *Peacock* surveyed part of Vatulele and coasted along southwest Viti Levu,¹⁹ that this part of Fiji came to be firmly inscribed on English language charts.

Why was the information from the sightings from the *Ann and Hope* in 1799, and the mapped data shown in Figure 1, not used on later charts for several decades? The sighting was not kept secret. Carter's report, giving the reasonably accurate position from which the western end of Kadavu was seen (as 19°S, 177°30'E) was printed in no fewer than seven New England newspapers and in the *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser* between 4 and 13 August 1800.²⁰ This might well have been linked up with Bligh's map if that were available in New England. Of course, copying and reproducing charts was much more difficult then than now. We can only surmise that, despite Carter's obvious desire to make information available promptly for other New England vessels venturing into the South Pacific, the flow of intelligence about new sightings from merchant ships 200 years ago was extremely slow between New England and Europe, and even between centres such as Paris and London. Another example of the slow spread of navigation information is given by Lee in the case of Bligh's second voyage through Fiji in 1792. In Arrowsmith's chart of 1814, Bligh's 'track is very incorrectly laid down, and it must have been drawn without reference to Bligh's original chart'.²¹

Another minor puzzle relating to the first sighting of southwestern Fiji is why Henderson, in his book *The Discoveries of the Fiji Islands*, concludes that Captain Bentley should not be included as one of the 'discoverers'. His argument is largely based on what appears to be a rather generous interpretation of how far south along the west coast of Viti Levu and the Yasawa and Mamanuca chains Bligh saw from the *Bentley's* launch in 1789. As noted above, Bligh's chart²² suggests that he did not see much beyond 17°S along the Yasawa chain, and the chart seems to show only the north coast of Viti Levu, from about Nananu-i-Ra, near Rakiraki, to Vania Peninsula, near Tavua. This is much less than Henderson's claim that Bligh saw the land as far south as the Kaupadra Range, south of Lauvoka and the whole Yasawa chain south to Waya.²³ It seems much more

¹⁶ [J.W. Davidson], 'History, 1513-1843', in Naval Intelligence Division, *Pacific Islands*, vol. 1: *General Survey*, Geographical Handbook Series (London 1939-43), 274. Davidson's authorship of what are anonymous chapters in the Geographical ['Admiralty'] Handbooks is documented in R.G. Ward, 'Davidson's Contributions to the "Admiralty Handbooks"', *Journal of Pacific History*, 29 (1994), 238-40.

¹⁷ E. Im Thurn and L.C. Wharton (eds) *The Journal of William Larkyer* (London 1923), map in end pocket.

¹⁸ Henderson, *The Discoveries*, 265.

¹⁹ Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia 1844), 217.

²⁰ Ward, *American Activities in the central Pacific*, 365.

²¹ Lee, *Captain Bligh's Second Voyage*, 157.

²² *Ibid.*, 146-7.

²³ Henderson, *The Discoveries*, 146-9, 257-65.

likely that Bentley and his companions were the first white people to see most of western and southwestern Viti Levu, and this would argue that Henderson should not have excluded Bentley from his list of 'discoverers'. This debate, however, begs the wider question of the justice of limiting the term 'discoverers' to 'Europeans' or 'whites', as Henderson does, and ignoring the fact of prior 'discovery' and occupation by Fijians and other oceanic voyagers. But, regardless of this rather pointless debate about definitions, it is clear that the chart produced on the *Ann and Hope* was the first chart of southwest Fiji and is now published here for the first time, over 200 years after Bentley and his crew saw these coastlines.

R. GERRARD WARD