

5. Liberalism, Imperialism and colonial expansion

Of all the colonies in the Pacific Ocean, only Fiji, where the labour trade was also active, was seen to be of much interest to the Imperial government (Ward 1948: 261). This had not always been so. In 1855, Seru Ebenezer Cakobau, warrior chief (*Vunivalu*) of Bau, had been held responsible by the United States Government for the payment of compensation to the government totalling US\$45,000 as a result of a fire that had begun by accident. Cakobau was seen by the Americans to be the 'King of Fiji' and as a result of this demand he turned to the British Consul for assistance. In 1858 he petitioned Great Britain to accept his offer of ceding the whole of Fiji to the Crown. The Colonial Office declined. Lord Carnarvon reported that Fiji 'would be a troublesome and unprofitable addition to the empire' (Drus 1950: 87). There was also some disquiet in London about Cakobau's claims to be paramount chief and his right to cede all islands to a foreign power (Robson 1995: 173).

The Colonial Office was strongly influenced in this decision by Sir William Denison, the Governor of New South Wales, who became alarmed by unrest in New Zealand as a result of the influx of white settlers there. So strongly was the Colonial Office against annexation of the islands that they requested the Foreign Office to formally rebuke Consul William Pritchard who had promoted the idea. Pritchard was later dismissed from the service after a very dubious commission of inquiry and a campaign against him by the Wesleyan missionaries (Robson 1995: 175; Drus 1950: 90). The excuses London gave were to echo throughout colonial history in the Pacific: the cost of administration would be too great, it would involve Britain in native wars, and it would create disputes with other civilised countries, notably Germany and France. However, settlers from Australia began moving into Fiji in the late 1860s and indentured labourers from other islands were imported to work the settler plantations. The general impression in London was that New South Wales might be willing to administer the Fijian islands but the idea of sub-Imperialism was not practical.

Eventually, in reply to a request from Fiji, the British government sent a commission of inquiry to consider the situation with regard to succession. In 1874 Commodore James Goodenough of the Royal Navy Australia Station and Edgar L. Layard, then the new British Consul for Fiji and Tonga, were commissioned to report on the possibility of annexing Fiji to the territories of the British Crown. Personal instructions from Prime Minister Gladstone were that annexation was to be the last resort. The Colonial Office expressed a preference for a protectorate rather than a colony. However, Goodenough and Layard reported back to Parliament that same year with a long report recommending

formal annexation of the Fijian islands and stating that as a 'Crown Colony, we think that Fiji would certainly become a prosperous Settlement' (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons 1874a and 1874b; Scholefield 1919: 90). The two men had spent more than five months investigating the prospects of Fiji but when the comprehensive report came to be discussed in Parliament, Gladstone was no longer in office. He publically declined to support annexation. The new Conservative Party government which subsequently annexed Fiji was able to have the *Pacific Islanders Protection Act* 1875 (38 & 39 Vic c51) passed containing a clause giving jurisdiction over British subjects in the Pacific (see Whittaker *et al.* 1975: Document D38). Cakobau, chosen by the British government to be High Chief, was never fully recognised as paramount chief of all the islands. The annexation was in response to concerns that the white settlers of Fiji, keen to develop a plantation economy in the islands, were threatening communal landowners with dispossession and exploitation; but more than this, Britain was without a naval base between Australia and America. There was no intention of embarking on an expansive policy of widespread annexation of islands in the Pacific. Despite this, the annexation of Fiji was the start of the breakdown of the 'jealously guarded ramparts of the minimum intervention policy'. From this time British influence in the Pacific widened (Drus 1950: 109; Ward 1948: 265).

Western Pacific High Commission

Annexation did not solve the many problems of trade, politics and European settlement in the Western Pacific. It would not be until 1877 that the complete and complex Western Pacific Order In Council would be formulated to manage the engagement of indentured labourers and to control the excess of British subjects in the Western Pacific beyond the jurisdiction of British and colonial Australian laws (see Whittaker *et. al* 1975: Document D39; Great Britain. Laws etc 1877–1893; Hertslet 1880 and 1885). With the order in council the Colonial Office in London proposed the establishment of a Commission of the Governor of Fiji that would give the Governor authority over persons and acts in the islands south of the equator (Morrell 1960: 181). The original document of 321 articles specified that the Governor, as High Commissioner and Consul-General, had four important functions: to communicate with local representatives of the foreign powers, to conduct diplomatic relations specifically with the Polynesian governments of Samoa and Tonga, to regulate the Pacific labour trade where it was conducted by British subjects only, and to maintain law and order among British subjects in the Pacific islands where there were no recognised governments, such as in Melanesia.

The power to enter into relations with native states and tribes was effective only in the southern Polynesian islands where chieftainship was hereditary and a

formal hierarchy of responsibility rested with the chiefly class. This power was ineffective in Melanesia where local leaders, known as either Big-men or Chiefs, held power only over the immediate village or group of villages. Their power was not hereditary but open and volatile, subject to allegiances of kinsmen and personal followers. Here the idea of negotiating the concept of a broad encompassing 'statehood' was irrelevant. The Western Pacific Order in Council was designed to be 'an ingeniously worked out experiment, an attempt to make the new Crown Colony of Fiji a centre from which law and order might be disused throughout the unannexed islands of the Pacific' (Morrell 1960: 185). But the 321 articles dealt mostly with the appointment of officials and their powers, and matters of procedure of the High Commissioner's Court that sat in Suva. The Chief Justice of Fiji was also the Judicial Commissioner for the Western Pacific. Only six articles related to the actual duties of the High Commissioner. The most important of these gave the High Commissioner significant powers to make regulations for the government of British subjects in the Western Pacific (Art 24), to prohibit any person dangerous to peace and good order from living in any part of the Pacific (Art 25), and if necessary to remove that person from any island in which he is living (Art 26). These powers could be delegated to Deputy Commissioners. For these tasks the Colonial Office allocated annual funds of £5,000 (Scarr 1967a: 34). The Foreign Office and the Colonial Office were in constant disagreement over legal and administrative roles and responsibilities but between 1877 and the early 1900s the office of High Commissioner of the Western Pacific was to gain executive powers over a wide area of the Western Pacific.

The Western Pacific Order in Council was reviewed by a commission of inquiry in 1883 (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1884b; Newbury 2010: 108). This commission noted the complexity of the code and the sheer physical difficulty in applying the principles of the orders in such a scattered area as the Western Pacific. Subsequently a consolidation was prepared in 1888 and a revised Order in Council in 1893 gave Resident Commissioners wider autonomy (Great Britain. High Commissioner for Western Pacific Islands 1893; Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1893; Great Britain. Laws etc 1877–1893; Scarr 1967a: 252). Initially, underlying these principles was the desire of both the Colonial and Foreign Offices to avoid the financial and political complications associated with making new annexations in an area considered so economically worthless as the Pacific. The administrative agency, the Western Pacific High Commission, despite its influence in the Pacific region for more than 80 years, 'should be seen as a rather weak experiment in providing order and jurisdiction without assuming sovereignty' (Hyam 2002: 209).

Christianity and the Melanesian Mission

By the end of the 19th century, Britain had become a 'proselytizing nation' where mission influence and prestige stood high in political life (Ward 1948: 328). The policy of minimum intervention was overturned by the expansion of the other colonial powers, Germany and France, into the Pacific. The Australian colonies were becoming richer and more economically important after the gold rushes and missionary activity centred in the colonies was spreading outwards and into the Pacific. But the first missionaries to try to establish a base in the Solomon Islands were members of the Roman Catholic Society of Mary. The party of 11 Marist Fathers landed at Astrolabe Bay on Isabel in 1845 but the leader, Bishop Jean-Baptiste Epalle, was killed at Pinhudi with one of his own trade axes and buried at Haili on the island of San Jorge (St George Island) (Laracy 1976: 17–18; see Whittaker *et al.* 1975: Document C15). The rest of the party then relocated to the south and lived for 20 months at Makira Bay on San Cristobal. Here, again, mistrust between the local people and the priests grew and fever, dysentery and attacks from the bush people killed off three more. This mission was abandoned in September 1847. They were not to return until 1898.

After George Augustus Selwyn, the Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, formed the Australasian Board of Missions in 1850, the idea of a Melanesian Mission in the Western Pacific began and the role of a missionary bishop was fostered within the Anglican Churches in the colonies (Davidson 2000: 9–10). It was the Anglican Church under Selwyn, and not the British government, that made the first direct move into the Western Pacific. Each year after 1847 Selwyn, based in New Zealand, made a long missionary tour through the Samoan and Cook Islands, into New Hebrides and on into the Melanesian islands. In 1854, Selwyn secured a new mission schooner, the *Southern Cross*, and enlisted the aid of John Coleridge Patteson. The Melanesian Mission established a centre at Mota Island in the Banks Group (now the Torba Province of Vanuatu) and Mota became the lingua franca of the mission. In 1861, Bishop Patteson was consecrated as 'Missionary Bishop among the Western Islands of the South Pacific Ocean' and he began regular voyages around the Melanesian islands (Davidson 2000: 19). These continued until his death in Nukapu in 1871. The Melanesian Mission supported Britain's pacification and civilising influences and enhanced its power and status in London with the appointment in London of prominent men to positions of Vice-President of the English Committee of the church. These men had close and direct ties with the even more powerful Colonial Office. Ties of class and friendship were powerful factors behind the strength of the colonial state and Anglican missions.

The Protestant churches—the London Missionary Society, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, and the Melanesian Mission—carved out spheres of influence for themselves in the Western Pacific. At first, Selwyn declared that there was no rivalry between the denominations and this comity principle was to form the basis of future agreements in the Solomon Islands. But the arrival of the evangelists, the members of the Queensland Kanaka Mission, the Seventh-day Adventists and other sects would be another matter (Davidson 2000: 20). The London Missionary Society first settled in Samoa and part of New Caledonia before moving on to the Torres Strait and mainland Papua, the Methodists took responsibility for Fiji and Tonga, the Presbyterians had taken over the southern parts of New Hebrides, while the Melanesian Mission secured the northern islands of New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands. In Polynesia, the Methodists and the London Missionary Society had the advantage of commonalities between eastern and western Polynesian languages and Māori and some degree of social hierarchy and formal structure. These indigenous characteristics enabled the hierarchical nature of church leadership to gain adherents within the islands.

Missionary activities in Melanesia would face much more complex local factors. In particular, there were numerous small groups of people with no formal social hierarchy visible to Europeans and with many hundreds of separate, mutually unintelligible languages (Davidson 2000: 12). In addition, the early attitudes of people to Christianity would confuse. Many local people saw the teachings of the church as another set of commodities that could be blended into the customary social and economic systems. Prayers and rituals took the place of sorcery and magic. Both could be taught to followers or traded to allies. To overcome these obstacles, Selwyn planned to take young men from their home communities to a central location and train them for future evangelising on their return. This began in 1851 after the first group of islander men arrived at Auckland on the Melanesian Mission boat *Border Maid* having been brought south by the HMS *Havannah*. Their early experiences in New Zealand were not a success. Many young men, removed from the tropical climate to Kohimarama near Auckland, could not adjust to the climate and illnesses. In 1867, the Mission established St Banabas College, a church and training centre on Norfolk Island. Here the public school model was adopted and Mota language, adopted from the mission based in the New Hebrides, was used as a lingua franca for education and worship. Christian ideas of marriage and the formality of European society were taken as a guide for relationships between men and women and English church rituals were transplanted along with the use of the Book of Common Prayer (Davidson 2000: 22). But a growing paternalism meant the increased reliance on English staff delayed the achievement of an independent indigenous church.

Removing young men from the islands for their Christian training was not entirely an original idea of the Melanesian Mission. It stemmed from the problems faced

by the Presbyterian missions in the New Hebrides. The Rev John Inglis of the Reformed Presbyterian Church had written a detailed report for the Governor of New Zealand, Sir George Grey, describing a three-month missionary tour to the New Hebrides, the southern Solomon Islands and New Caledonia made on HMS *Havannah* in 1851. Grey was particularly concerned with possible French expansion in the Pacific and the settlement of English Protestant missionaries in New Hebrides was supported as a counter to French colonialism and the inroads made by Catholic missionaries (Sinclair 2011). Inglis was a careful observer of the local people and the problems faced by missions establishing themselves in the remote islands. He suggested in his report that young men be removed to New Zealand for training and this report was subsequently printed in the New Zealand government gazette and in full in a leading Sydney newspaper ('Missionary tour' *The Sydney Morning Herald* 30 May 1851: 3–4). In the end, Inglis and his wife accepted John Geddie's invitation to assist in the Presbyterian mission on Aneityum in the south of the New Hebrides where they were to remain for the next 24 years (Parsonson 2010). These English missionaries in the Pacific were not the conscious agents of British colonialism, although they certainly advanced British Protestant ideals (Hilliard 1974: 94). While they actively sought the overarching protection of English law and order they did not demand annexation of the islands as a means for achieving this protection. Still, they were identifiably Imperialist in association. The Melanesian Mission was regarded as High Church Anglican founded on Christian Humanism. It was, however, a 'well-bred mission' for many of the clergy came from well-to-do, educated upper-middle class, well-connected families (Hilliard 1978: 145). They brought with them ideas of paternalism and hierarchy that was sympathetic to the aims of colonial administration.

Cecil Wilson, the third missionary Anglican Bishop of Melanesia between 1894 to 1911, was, like Charles Woodford, educated at Tonbridge. Wilson graduated from Jesus College, Cambridge, and served in several parishes in England before his consecration. The Melanesian Mission was led by Oxford and Cambridge graduates who, like Wilson, were imbued with Victorian intellectual ideas and who were fascinated with studies of local languages, ethnology and cultural practices. While they remained fascinated by native culture it was seen only as an intellectual study for they consciously sought to change people's beliefs and practices in their everyday lives. Hilliard (1966: 139) comments that 'Wilson was a conscientious but uninspiring missionary; humourless and, his bishop observed, "quick to see wrong or faulty doing"'.

In order to service their stations, the Melanesian Mission acquired the first of a number of ships to be called *Southern Cross*. The first *Southern Cross* was built to replace the *Undine*, a small 21-ton schooner used from 1849 to 1857. It was a 100-ton schooner that served from 1855 to 1860 when it was wrecked off the coast of

New Zealand. The second *Southern Cross* served from 1863 to 1873. It was a 93-ton brigantine built in Southampton and was the vessel involved in the Nukapu incident when John Coleridge Patteson and his assistants were murdered. The killing of Patteson raised the anger of the British public not only because a senior member of the Anglican clergy was murdered but also by the evidence presented to Parliament by Albert Markham: 'It has been the custom of some of these [labour] vessels to visit the different islands which the late Bishop Patteson used to frequent, and inform the natives that they were sent by him, and on some occasions these unprincipled men have actually walked about on deck in surplices, so as to represent the bishop' (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1872: 8). Markham reported that some labour vessels traded in captured heads and exchanged them for the equivalent number of live men (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1872: 9). The third *Southern Cross* was a larger topsail schooner of 180-tons with an auxiliary steam engine that saw service in the Solomon Islands from 1874 to 1892. This vessel was built in Auckland at the cost of £5,000. It would be of considerable importance to Charles Woodford during his early work as a naturalist from 1886 to 1889 for he met with the mission ship at a number of places during his travels. The fourth *Southern Cross* was a 240-ton three-masted schooner built in Essex in England at the cost of £9,000 which was contributed by Bishop John Selwyn and others. It saw service from 1892 to 1902. The fifth *Southern Cross* was a steel, three-masted schooner with an auxiliary steam engine launched by Bishop Cecil Wilson. It was in service from 1903 to the early 1930s (Beattie 1906; Sinker 1907; Wilson 1932).

The Melanesian Mission, along with the Pacific labour trade and the few coastal traders, preceded the establishment of colonial administration in the Solomon Islands by more than 40 years. Most of these mission stations were isolated, vulnerable and dependant on the generosity of local villagers during an unstable social and political time. Stability and amity were required between the missions and the local people. To understand the power relations that existed in communities, missionaries were often the first to learn local language. An understanding of local language required some cultural knowledge and so the missionaries often became the earliest interlockers between tradition and change. But even the missions depended on the visits by the Royal Naval men-of-war that patrolled the islands between May and October each year. This was the only time that British law was enforced. Even the intervention of the navy was seasonal, as was the annual voyage of the *Southern Cross*.

Missionaries saw themselves as pursuing a political agenda that filled the gap between fervent British colonialism and neutrality. The local people, however, saw the missionaries, the traders, the labour recruiters and later the government officials as representing one group: foreigners with power, technology and

unlimited resources. Missionaries certainly saw themselves as a social and moral group much superior to traders and labour recruiters. All white men were seen by the local people as agents of change regardless of their moral and philosophical character (Hilliard 1974: 97). The success of the Christian missions was dependant on political and social stability; societies in a perpetual state of war and victimisation could not be converted peacefully. Although George Selwyn wrote that the Melanesian frontier could not be pacified by annexation or naval bombardment, his faith in 'moral influence and good example' would not be sufficient to calm troubled peoples. While adverse to annexation by the Crown, the Melanesian Mission did not object to the formation of a protectorate. Under international law a protectorate was not regarded as a separate state. It was presumed to have a strong colonial 'protector' assisting and guiding the rule of a native state. In a protectorate, indigenous forms of governance were supposed to be available for use by the protecting state. The administration was overseen by a Commissioner or High Commissioner, not a Governor. In the case of the Solomon Islands, as in other parts of Melanesia where there were no pre-existing native states to grant Britain power and jurisdiction by treaty, grant or other law, the protectorate would be in effect a colony without formal annexation. Legally British protectorates existed outside the Territorial Dominions of the Crown. In Melanesia, where they were not obtained by treaty, jurisdiction was limited to rule over British subjects (Hookey 1971: 233). Together with the *Pacific Islanders Protection Act* 1875, the *Foreign Jurisdiction Act* 1890 (53 & 54 Vic c.37) gave the Crown jurisdiction within any islands and places in the Pacific Ocean not being within the dominions of the Crown nor within the jurisdiction of any civilised, by definition European, power. The implications of this vague legal status would be important for colonial policing, the trade in arms and ammunition, the prosecution of non-British subjects and the alienation of land. Although the Germans had made a distinction in theory between colonies (*Kolonien*) and protectorates (*Schutzgebieten*) in practice they were governed alike (Munro, McCreery and Firth 2004: 146). It was not until the passing of the consolidation of the foreign jurisdiction legislation in 1890 that Britain brought its theory into line with continental practice. From then on British colonial protectorates were administered as if they were formal colonies. By the mid-1890s British legal jurisdiction in the Western Pacific was extended over British subjects, foreigners and 'natives' alike. This would have important implications when the Gilbert and Ellice Islands came under British control in 1893 and the southern Solomon Islands came under Woodford's administration in 1897.

Commodore Justice

It was the death of John Coleridge Patteson, the newly consecrated Bishop of Melanesia, in September 1871 at Nukapu in the Solomon Islands that increased efforts to regulate the Pacific labour trade. It was widely believed that Patteson was killed because young men being taken away from the islands by labour recruiters did not return. Another version of the death was that the missionaries failed to understand the complexities of reciprocity. Patteson had given the Nukapu chief a considerable gift, but then gave a smaller gift to the chief of Santa Cruz who considered himself of higher status. To avenge the honour of the chief the people of Santa Cruz travelled to Nukapu and killed Patteson there (Scarr 1973: 277). A more complex interpretation is that Patteson, by repeated and increasingly unwelcome visits to Nukapu, ignored the message that the people did not want their young men taken away. Perhaps Patteson's interactions with women on the island, contrary to strict Polynesian custom, served to undermine the political and cosmological equilibrium (Kolshus and Hovdhaugen 2010: 351–355). Patteson thus became the 'martyr bishop' of the Melanesian Mission (Hilliard 1966: 58).

Albert Markham, commander of the HMS *Rosario*, had been commissioned to board and inspect all vessels suspected of being involved in the labour trade off the New Hebrides and the Santa Cruz Islands. At Norfolk Island he learned of the murder of Patteson and proceeded to Nukapu with instructions to punish the murderers. There, at Nukapu, the *Rosario* fired a broadside of shells from the man-of-war towards the small coral island that would have done considerable damage (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1873: 15). Later, Markham's superior, Commodore Stirling, wrote to the Admiralty that he was 'totally adverse to any indiscriminate firing upon the South Sea Islanders; the wrongs which they have suffered and are suffering at the hands of white people are well known' (Bach 1968: 19). Markham felt that there was a need 'to shield and protect the Islanders' from what he saw as 'the nefarious system of kidnapping [that] is practised to a most inconceivable extent' throughout the islands (Samson 2003b: 290). It was his opinion that the 'consequent retaliations on the part of the islanders' were solely due to the lawless acts perpetuated by labour recruiters and vessel captains (Markham 1872: 231).

Markham subsequently wrote detailed accounts of the cruise of the *Rosario* in 1871 and 1872, and the topic became the subject of much debate in London (Markham 1872 and 1871–1872; Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1872). The navy was forced into a position where it was subject to increasing pressure to take punitive action against islanders involved in retaliatory action. There was little satisfaction to be found in navigating coral waters to 'throw a handful of shot into grass huts and palm trees' (Bach 1968:

13). Despite Markham's belief that in many cases the local people were justified in taking retaliatory action against labour vessels, the action of the *Rosario* could hardly be dismissed with simply throwing 'a handful of shot into grass huts'. The *Rosario* shelled the small coral atoll with 100 rounds from a RML 7 inch 6½ ton gun and an Armstrong RBL 40 pounder fired at broadside. Both guns were heavy defence naval guns used in shore installations and on naval frigates ('The *Rosario* and the murderers of Bishop Patteson', *The Argus* 15 February 1872: 7). The *Argus* strongly condemned the action it had just reported. In the same paper it stated: 'It is merely repeating a trite maxim to affirm that to prevent the commission of a crime is a much more rational proceeding than to wait until it has been perpetrated, and then to punish the culprit' (*The Argus*, 15 February 1872: 4 and 5).

This naval action became known as 'Commodore Justice' (Ward 1948: 58; Healy 1967: 19) or 'Government by Commodore' (Scholefield 191: 63). The two types of naval visits—the expeditions sent to administer justice against outrages committed by natives and the routine visits of inspection and survey—merged into one (Ward 1948: 60). The administration of 'Commodore Justice' was also used as part of the early attempts at establishing a protectorate in British New Guinea. When missionaries, traders and miners became attracted to south-western New Guinea after the 1870s, the Royal Navy sent ships to the coast to monitor British interests 'and occasionally bombarded recalcitrant villages to show them how to keep the peace' (Quinnell 2000: 82). These arbitrary and informal sanctions applied by the Royal Navy in the Western Pacific were designed solely to protect or avenge the lives of Europeans in order to open up the territory to white settlement, plantation development, and in the case of British New Guinea, to gold mining (Healy 1967: 20–21). In order for the Royal Navy to perform such tasks the action was officially declared an 'act of war' and in the early period the Royal Navy was at its own discretion in administering retribution (Ward 1948: 277). For local people the arrival of the men-of-war was a signal to flee the area. It was obvious that the navy was clearly unsuited for such broad and difficult policing tasks that required local understanding, cross-cultural communication and some measure of diplomacy. The navy misrepresented the power of local Big-men, failed to understand local ideas of justice, retribution and conflict resolution and the complexities of compensation.

This stimulated anti-slavery and humanitarian groups in Britain to lobby the government and subsequently the *Pacific Islanders Protection Act* 1872 (35 & 36 Vict c19) was passed (Scholefield 1919: 60, WPHC 10/V Item 185). The act is also known as the *Kidnapping Act* of 1872 although the full title, *Act of the British Parliament for the Prevention of Criminal Charges upon Natives of the Islands in the Pacific Ocean (Kidnapping)*, provides the clue to the purpose, intent and

limitations of the legislation. The Kidnapping Act was seen by the Imperial government in London as a means for addressing a slave trade in the Pacific, but having been found wanting in the *Daphne* case, all references to slavery in the legislation were removed. In future, any prosecutions for illegal actions by blackbirders had to avoid the use of the term slavery in the courts (Mortensen 2000: 13). Under the now failing policy of minimum intervention the Imperial government in London declined to interfere markedly in affairs in the Pacific, apart from direct action by the Royal Navy Australia Station. But naval action could hardly be called minimum intervention. The activities of the labour recruiters in the Solomon Islands also drew comment from American writers in the years following the American Civil War of 1860–1865 and Markham's book was used as the basis of a long article published in the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* that was full of pious hope for the Christianisation of the 'natives'—described in racist terms of social degradation and inhumanity—while deploring the activities of the Pacific labour traders (Rideing 1874). The Pacific labour trade did not pass unnoticed in other parts of the world.

Punitive action in the Solomon Islands

The Melanesian Mission and the Royal Navy became inextricably linked into ties of dependency and cooperation long before the formation of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1893. One such case was the search for the murderers of the boat crew from the HMS schooner *Sandfly* at Nggela (Florida Islands), the islands between Guadalcanal and Malaita. Lieutenant-Commander Bower and five crew men from the *Sandfly* had gone in October 1880 from Tasimboko on Guadalcanal by small boat to survey Nggela but when they were reported overdue an expedition was mounted. Eventually the bodies of four headless men were found on the beach on the small Mandoleana (Mandoliana) Island off Nggela Pile (Small Nggela). They had been attacked by men from Gaeta village whose chief was Kalekona.

One man had drowned in an escape attempt but another sailor, Francis Savage, swam to nearby Honggo village on Nggela Pile. He was then handed over to the *Sandfly* crew by these friendly villagers. The remaining crew of the *Sandfly* then burned a village at Raita Bay (Mboli) (*The Nelson Evening Mail*, 15 (250), 13 December 1880: 4) in retaliation for the murders. In December 1880 the corvette HMS *Emerald* under Captain William Maxwell was ordered by Commodore Wilson to find the murderers of the *Sandfly* crew and 'pursuing them even into the interior of their country "inflict" on them the severe punishment they so well deserve. This is a case where the prestige of the Navy is deeply concerned, and one by which if the murderers are not severely chastised, its power for good, and as a deterrent to crime amongst the islands, will receive a great shock'

(Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1881; Scholefield 1919: 65). Maxwell landed with a party of 60 men but 'notwithstanding all my [Maxwell's] precautions, and though my orders were executed with exactness, and the party landed before dawn of day, the natives [of the hill villages] had all decamped, and no one was to be seen'. The marines then proceeded to Raita (Mboli) in Mboli Passage and once again set a village alight and destroyed more than 270 coconut trees. The crew of the *Emerald* shelled other coastal villages before sailing to Malaita to investigate attacks on other vessels. The 'whole district was in ashes' wrote Bishop John Selwyn (Hilliard 1978: 91, 116 fn11). On this second attempt, the murderers of Bower and his men were not found. Subsequently, these proceedings were the subject of questions in the House of Commons when the Secretary of the Admiralty was forced to defend punitive action in the islands (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers, Commons sitting of Monday 18 July 1881).

In May 1881 yet another expedition was sent to Nggela. The naval sloop HMS *Cormorant* was despatched from Sydney to find the murderers and execute them. The *Cormorant* rendezvoused with the mission vessel *Southern Cross* at Uji and Bishop Selwyn 'had an interview with Commander Bruce [of the *Cormorant*] and represented that he had discovered the whole story of the massacre, and that if Commander Bruce should use coercion and take time the murderers of Lieutenant Bower would be given up' (*Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 7 July 1881: 7, quoting from *The Sydney Morning Herald*). Selwyn joined this second expedition in the role of mediator. He convinced Kalekona, referred to as the chief of Nggela, to turn Queen's evidence on receipt of a pardon and to surrender the men responsible for the murders (Guppy 1887b: 17). Vurea, Kalekona's son, who had been involved in the attack on Bower, was held as hostage until the men were apprehended. Commander Bruce submitted a full report to the Western Pacific High Commission on the action taken in the *Sandfly* case but the Royal Navy's version differs considerably from local understanding.

Three men caught were subsequently executed: Honambosa, the leader, was hanged over Bower's grave on Mandoliana, Illomali was killed at Mboli, and a third man Tafou was taken to Uji and shot there (Woodford papers PMB 1290. Item 1/4 Diary 25 August 1886). Vurea, the chief's son, was held as a hostage until all men were surrendered and then sent to Uji to work for nine months with the trader John Stephens. He was then released (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 1881: 5 and 26 September 1881: 7–8). Selwyn's reasoning for using his influence was that the 'whole island was threatened with war if the men were not surrendered. The justice of the demand was fully acknowledged by themselves. The lesson was needed, and has been most salutary, and will under God, put a stop to such attempts for the future' (Hilliard 1974: 99 quoting

the Report of the Melanesian Mission for the year 1881). Selwyn also referred to this incident in his Christmas report on the work of the Melanesian Mission in 1896 (Selwyn 1896: 10). Much later, during his travels to the islands, Woodford would hear that Tafou, the young man executed in place of Vurea, was a Malaitan slave boy offered up in place of the chief's son. The trader at Fauro, J. C. Macdonald, would later tell Woodford that Selwyn had participated in 'a grievous miscarriage of justice'. The likely story of the substitution of a slave boy was not confirmed by the Rev Alfred Penny in his account of the naval actions. Penny reported that a fourth man, Puko, escaped capture and fled to another part of Nggela (Penny 1888). He was never caught.

The reason for the murder of Bower and his men was that Kalekona had lost some shell money and felt himself spiritually rebuked. He believed only the taking of a man's head would resolve the trouble. In his pastoral paper Selwyn wrote that the women of the village taunted the men and told them they were afraid to kill white men and that this was sufficient reason for the men taking action to murder the sailors. In fact, little attempt was made to fully understand the motives behind the killings and even less attempt was made to find out the status of the men who were executed. Kalekona's relationship with the three executed was also an important factor in the entire episode. This too was never examined. For local people, the action by Selwyn was evidence that the mission and the navy worked together. Rev Penny referred to this incident in his book not only to justify the men-of-war actions in the islands but also to emphasise that the navy had to exercise caution in its punishment of the people and in the destruction of their homes and crops. He felt justified in chastising the local people and believed that they needed to learn caution. The moral was that retribution, like the actions of the Christian God, could be swift and fatal. Kalekona had yet another view on the incident for he boasted that he had once arranged to kill white men and used to say 'White man all same picaninny' (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 1/4 Diary 25 August 1886).

During the early stage of colonial contact in the Solomon Islands the white presence was maintained by the changing crews of labour vessels, a few missionaries and some traders living precariously on small islands or at isolated trading stations. Hugh Hastings Romilly (1882 and 1889), Deputy Commissioner for the Western Pacific between 1881 and 1883 and later Deputy Commissioner and Consul for the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands from 1887 to 1889, a man well known for his heavy drinking and for being largely unsympathetic about Pacific Islanders in general, prophetically wrote: 'The civilizing process which the Solomon Islanders have received at the hands of white men since that time [the 1850s] has made terrible savages of them' (Romilly 1886: 65). Romilly came to the conclusion that it 'was obvious that a deputy commissioner who commanded a warship would obtain obedience more readily than one who lived

on the hospitality of traders and travelled in labour ships' (Scarr 1967a: 128). Accompanying General Sir Peter Scratchley, the Special Commissioner in charge of the Protectorate of British New Guinea, on a tour of inspection of the eastern and north-eastern coasts of Papua in 1885, Romilly wrote:

We have been burning towns [villages] and smashing canoes, and other police work. We all hate it, and feel very mean while we are doing it. The natives have sworn to kill every white man, and they have killed a good many. They say they were stolen by Queensland ships and half their men died in Queensland, and they must have revenge ... It will take years before we have friendly intercourse with the natives of all these groups of islands. At present they hate us, and I think with justice (Whittaker *et al.* 1975: Document D40, 502–503; Healy 1967: 20).

Disillusioned with employment in the Colonial Office, and his work in the Western Pacific despite his good credentials and connections, Romilly went prospecting in Mashonaland in Southern Africa in 1891 and died there of fever aged 36 (Romilly 1893). He was another restless young man who found life in Victorian England stifling.

The voyage of HMS *Royalist* under Captain Edward Davis

In the Western Pacific, the inability of the High Commission to deal with offences committed by Islanders meant that the ships from the Royal Navy Australia Station, manned by men with strong humanitarian traditions like George Palmer and Albert Hastings Markham, were sent with increasing frequency to isolated islands with orders to pursue the murderers of white men. As commerce and Christianity spread into the islands, naval ships sought redress for crimes against Europeans who, in almost all cases, had voluntarily chosen to live there. Often the white foreigner was the guilty party responsible for breaking cultural prohibitions or insulting or physically assaulting local people. Trading stations were also places where coveted goods were seen to be hoarded or hidden. One consequence of the punitive campaigns was criticism from Britain where the opinion was that 'a naval officer was little more than an épauletted and power conscious bully, roving the ocean and terrorising harmless native communities at the expense of the English taxpayer' (Bach 1968: 13). The practice of shelling the villages where it was assumed offenders lived, proved to be arbitrary, unpredictable, often completely unfair and lastly, irrelevant.

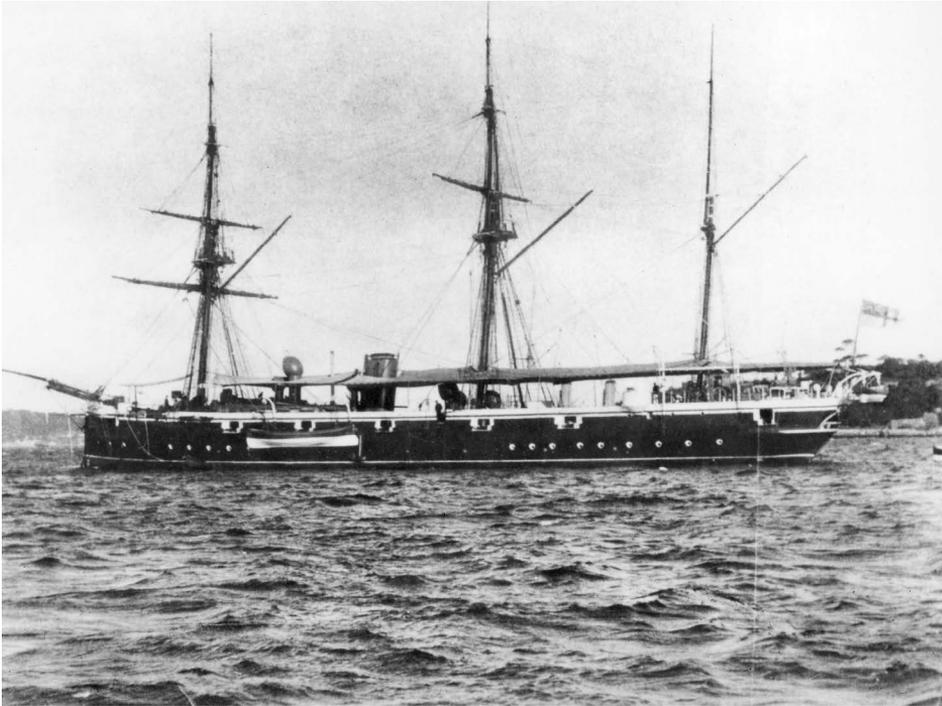


Figure 21. HMS *Royalist*, 1883.

Source: Australian War Memorial (www.awm.gov.au/collection/302264).

The 1891 voyage of the HMS *Royalist* to the Solomon Islands is a good example of the exercise of naval power in administering collective punishment. A letter by Peter Edmund Pratt to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (29 March 1889: 5) listed a number of murders of traders dating far back to 1867 that he said had not been adequately dealt with by the Royal Navy. Pratt considered the naval actions in the Solomon Islands to be lenient to the locals to such an extent that the men of Roviana were boasting of the powerlessness of the Royal Navy. He listed five murders in particular: the 1867 murders of 12 men from the *Marion Rennie* killed at Banietta on Rendova; the deaths of McIntosh and Jaffery from the *Esperanza* at Kolombangara in 1879; the murder of James Howie and crew from the *Elibank Castle* in May 1885 also at Banietta; the death of a John Childe (or Childers) at Simbo in September 1885; and the murders of two men from a vessel he called the *Prospect* at Dogby on Piandova—most likely the murder of two men from the *Progress* that occurred at Hughli on Rendova in 1887 (Bennett 1987: Appendix 6). These murders had a long history of over 20 years. Frank Wickham wrote to Rear Admiral George Tryon concerning these murders and reported the natives to be ‘snider-on-the-brain’ for they only had a few old rifles and were anxious to gain more Snider rifles (Great Britain. House of Commons.

Parliamentary Papers 1886: 13–14). But Pratt was especially angered over three raids on his trading station at Hombuhombu between October 1888 and June 1889. In these attacks he lost over £200 of trade goods in the early raids by men from Banietta and in late 1889 all the windows, doors and furniture of his house on the island were stolen. Even his kitchen garden was uprooted (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 29 March 1889: 5; Wright 2005: 280–281; Royal Navy (1886–1896), see Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/6: 1891). During the 20 June 1889 raid, while Pratt was away, men from Mbilua on Vella Lavella killed the manager, William Dabelle, and three workmen (Wright 2005: 275).

A second report in the paper (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 10 September 1889: 5) by Robert Cable, now master of the Maroon, detailed the growing insecurity felt by whites in the islands. It was this instability that forced Melinda Macdonald and her daughter from their Siniasoro Bay plantation on Fauro to the safety of their former trading station at Howla (Aola) on the north coast of Guadalcanal (Woodford to Thurston 10 January 1897 WPHC 4/IV 20/1897). Cable was working for Kelly and Williams, trading competitors of Peter Edmund Pratt, and Cable's report contains veiled criticisms of Pratt, who was known to have a poor business reputation. Captain George Hand, commander of the HMS *Royalist*, was then dispatched to the islands to investigate these murders (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/4: 1889). Pratt would not accompany the ship on its cruise for fear his presence on board the naval gunboat would damage his trade there but Hand bombarded Narovo on Simbo after hearing that the men who made the first attack were hiding in this location. Hand then took the *Royalist* to Anuta on another matter. There he arrested the chief, Sono (Jackson) there for the murder of Thomas Dabelle, brother of William Dabelle, on the grounds that Dabelle's belongings were found in Sono's possession. Sono was taken to Suva for investigation but was later released after the Rev Richard Comins of the Melanesian Mission and the trader Fred Howard wrote in support of his case (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/5, 1890: 14). Subsequently Sono was returned to Hada Bay with trade goods to the value of £5 and an assurance from local chiefs that they could better capture the murderers than the Royal Navy. Testimony against Sono had been given by Sam Keating and Thomas Woodhouse both of whom worked for Kelly and Williams. Sono, on the other hand, was trading for business rival G. J. Waterhouse (Bennett 1987: 55–56; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 November 1889: 8). It was clear that traders were interfering in local politics and using the power of the navy to settle scores. The Royal Navy could not find the murderers of Thomas Dabelle and, after much expense; the case was closed (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/6, 1891: 31). The new corvette, the HMS *Cordelia*, relocated to Australia from the China Station, was then sent to the islands to exact retribution. The command of the Australia Station was sensitive to criticism at that stage and so the *Cordelia* under Captain Harry Grenfell was ordered straight to the islands without first going to Sydney.

On Rendova, the village of Lokokongo was burnt, at Simbo arms were seized and villages shelled, at Waisisi on Malaita where the schooner *Savo* had been attacked the village and canoes were destroyed. As the *Cordelia* had ten 6-inch breech loading guns the firepower would have been considerable (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 28 October 1890: 6).

Following all this destruction, the *Royalist* under Captain Edward Davis was sent to the Solomon Islands in May 1891 to avenge a number of murders committed in previous years (*The Queenslander* 19 December 1891: 1158–1159; *The Brisbane Courier* 15 December 1891: 6; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/13). The details of the voyage were described to the newspapers by Thomas Woodhouse. Villages in the Maramasike Passage in south Malaita were shelled to punish Malaitans for the murder of Fred Howard, the German trader who had lived for years in the islands. Howard was killed for blood money in Uki ni Masi off the northern coast of Makira. Coastal communities in Makira were then shelled in response to the murder of Sam Craig of the schooner *Sandfly* who had been killed at Anuta in retribution for the deaths of some Makiran labourers in Fiji. A local man Tamahine (Taiemi) was executed at the same spot that Craig was killed (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/6, 1891: 12). Then on Vella Lavella, the *Royalist* shelled the hill village of Ndovele because four crewmen of a trading vessel were killed for their heads by Tono, a local chief. Tono was later found dead in the village. Tono's war canoes, the construction and dedication of which were the purpose for taking the heads, were then burnt.

But it was the destruction wrought on the coastal communities of the Roviana Lagoon that was to cause the most sustained impact. The *Royalist* was anchored in Hathorn Sound between Kohinggo and New Georgia. Davis and his men in the ship's boats then proceeded to Roviana Lagoon but Davis could not secure the apprehension of the seven men from Mbilua on Vella Lavella wanted for the murders of William Dabelle, and the men from the *Marshall S.* Hiqava and his priest Wange were implicated in hiding the accused, so Davis assembled all the local *ba□ara* on the evening of 24 September and warned them that their homes and villages would all be burnt if the men were not found. Davis and his men, including over 80 from the *Royalist* and the *Ringdove*, camped at Kokorapa on Nusa Roviana. When the wanted men were not handed over in time Davis landed at Munda. 'All the villages were destroyed, and it is to be hoped that these savages, the noted Rubiana head-hunters, who have depopulated all the surrounding islands by their cruel practices, will not soon forget their well-merited punishment', reported the *Sydney Morning Herald* (10 December 1891: 4). Davis later wrote in his report to the Admiralty that '400 houses, 150 canoes, and 1,000 heads were destroyed. In one house I found twenty-four heads ranged along one side, but it was too dark to see the rest of the house', but the marines could not find all the *tomoko* for the 'big canoes had been removed into

the shallow lagoons, where, with the small force at my disposal, it was quite impossible to get at them' (Wright 2005: 288 and 2009: 230; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 10 December 1891: 4; Royal Navy (1886–1896), see Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/6, 1891: 11). Sisiata, Hiqava's village in Kekehe district, was not damaged because he was on an apparently innocent fishing expedition.

Schneider (1996: 114–115), who undertook research along the Munda coast, doubts that the crew of the *Royalist* could have destroyed all the villages in the area and burnt the coastal village of Kalikoqu on the lagoon side of Nusa Roviana as well. He also casts doubt on the figures quoted by Davis and repeated by Jackson (1978: 101) that the men of the *Royalist* were able to burn such a large number of houses and canoes and were able to smash 1,000 skulls in the time they spent in the Roviana area. But Davis did destroy ancestral shrines, burnt canoe houses and ritual houses and removed a number of artefacts including one intact skull-house, a ritual food trough and a *tomoko*. Photographs of the action show smoke from burning huts among coconut groves and troops parading in front from canoe and dwelling houses, but not the widespread destruction reported by Davis (Macleay Museum, University of Sydney. Photographs from an original album from the Fiji Museum, Suva. HP87.14 images 11, 13, 21, 22 and 24). The artefacts taken by Davis are now in the British Museum, the Auckland Museum and in Germany (Wright 2005: 290).

Hiqava was supported by Norman Wheatley, a rival of fellow trader Frank Wickham. Wheatley supplied firearms to Hiqava and other chiefs at the same time other traders, like Kelly, Williams and Woodhouse, attempted to cultivate Hiqava's favour (Bennett 1987: 61). The interference in local politics by traders changed the balance of power in the region. However, it was indigenous adjustment that brought about the most profound changes to the local social structures. People on Nusa Roviana fled to safety on the mainland and the impact of this destruction was that the main centre of local polity at Kokorapa moved to the coastal communities around Kekehe. The actions of the *Royalist* certainly improved the political position of Hiqava relative to other local *ba□ara* but his survival, in political and economic terms, was attributed to his having ancestral efficacy (Wright 2005: 291). These changes did not occur quickly. Suppression of head hunting, the aim of the *Royalist* expedition, was only temporary. Not long after the naval visit to Roviana, Hiqava was able to muster 500 men, 22 *tomoko* and two English built boats along with 300–400 rifles and 5,000 rounds of ammunition for a raid on Choiseul in 1894 (Bennett 1987: 91; Wright 2005: 291). Destruction of the power of the other *ba□ara* meant that warriors coalesced to Hiqava and he emerged wealthy and powerful. Thus, when Woodford and Mahaffy began the final acts of pacification of the western Solomons after 1896, the centre of power had moved to the chiefly community of Sisiata and the power of the *ba□ara* on Nusa Roviana had waned. But the Dabelle cases

remained unsolved. Despite the long voyages, the cost of ship time, the cost of coal—30 shillings a ton, with men-of-war generally commanding 120 tons at a time—the murderers of William Dabelle and his brother were never captured (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/6, 1891: 19–23).

The *Royalist* then continued its six months cruise of the islands, in the meantime arresting the crew of the *Emma Fisher* for recruiting labourers without a licence (*The Australian Town and Country Journal* 2 January 1892: 45). The shipmaster, Thomas Woodhouse, had an expired licence but was in Sydney at the time. The temporary master of the ship was Robert Cable, now officially master of the schooner *Nautilus*, who had no licence to recruit at all. The *Emma Fisher* was towed to Suva and under the *Pacific Islanders Protection Acts* 1872 and 1875 the vessel, cargo and effects were condemned, or forfeited to the Crown by the Vice Admiralty Court (*The Queenslander* 19 December 1891: 1158–1159). The ship and its effects were sold for £400 (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/6, 1891: 48–61 and 8/21/7, 1891: 1–17). The cost of this action to the Royal Navy, and the bureaucratic time and expense incurred by the High Commission in Suva, while justified in law, was incalculable. The significance of this case is that the very people who had reported the killing of William Dabelle and who had complained about Royal Navy inaction the year before were deliberately and consciously breaking the labour recruitment laws at the same time. Peter Pratt's relations with the men of Mbilua, where he had damaged a *tomoko* in 1890, and with those in the Roviana Lagoon, whom he had cheated in copra buying deals, were primary reasons for the attacks on his station. Pratt was taken to Sydney by Captain Grenfell of the *Cordelia* to answer charges for his 'reprehensible conduct' where he was bound over to keep the peace for 12 months with a surety of £200 (Wright 2005: 283–284; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 28 October 1890: 6).

Not all Australian newspapers supported the Royal Navy's version of 'Commodore Justice'. The *Brisbane Courier* (16 December 1891: 4) compared the impact of the naval shelling of villages with the supposedly enlightened administration of Sir William MacGregor in British New Guinea. The paper stated that in British New Guinea 'it is possible to make friends of foes, even when they are ignorant, bloodthirsty savages, and by what methods it may be accomplished have been marvellously illustrated in the administration of Sir William MacGregor in New Guinea'. The only arms destroyed, according to the paper, were 'the arms of the turbulent,' and the supremacy of the administration has been achieved without loss of life. By comparison, Captain Davis on the *Royalist* almost without exception inflicted punishment on the guilty and the innocent by destroying villages and plantations. The revenge was also inflicted more than three years after the actual murders. The lack of concurrence between crime committed and punishment inflicted only accentuated the incomprehensibility of British

law and order. It was, according to the *Brisbane Courier* (16 December 1891: 4), 'inconsistent with the patience necessary to find individual culprits and impress the natives with the scrupulosity of British justice'.

Return to the Pacific

In 1894 Charles Woodford made the decision to return to Fiji with the hope that he could secure an official position by being on the spot in Suva. Britain had declared a protectorate in 1893 over the southern Solomon Islands, excluding Choiseul, Isabel and the Shortland Islands which were German territory, but this political move was not made to secure the islands for commercial reasons nor to protect the local people. It was a strategic move designed to thwart possible French and German intervention into the Western Pacific. The Germans had secured the northern Choiseul, Isabel and the Shortland Islands. To the south, New Caledonia had been annexed by France in 1853 along with the Loyalty Islands of Maré, Lifou and Ouvéa. Wallis (Uvea), Fortuna and Alofi were then annexed between 1887 and 1888. Britain saw these moves as a challenge to their interests in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the New Hebrides. Although the idea of the appointment of a British resident had been discussed in the Australian press as early as 1888 (*The South Australian Advertiser* 11 January 1888: 5) and 1894 (*The Argus* 13 December 1894: 5) no officials were appointed to administer the British sector. Sir William MacGregor, Administrator of British New Guinea, urged Lord Ripon to transfer jurisdiction over the Solomon Islands to him so that he would then be able to control the Pacific labour trade but Australian newspapers reported: 'The expense involved in this appointment of resident magistrates on the islands, however, hinders the consent of the [Imperial] Government being granted to this proposal' (*The Queenslander* 23 February 1895: 352). MacGregor's proposal was never acted upon by London. The Colonial Office knew that a resident Deputy Commissioner was required to watch over labour recruiting and to stop the trade in firearms that were being shipped from Sydney in boxes labelled hollowware, but they prevaricated. Criticism by Bishop John Richardson Selwyn in a speech to the Royal Colonial Institute that the office of the High Commission in Suva had failed to protect both local people and missionaries in the islands embarrassed the officials (Selwyn 1894; Scarr 1973: 275). This, from a senior bishop of the established church before influential members of the institute, carried considerable weight in London.

Festetics de Tolna and the search for the exotic

Not all visitors to the Western Pacific were scientists, naval officers or missionaries. The Solomon Islands was becoming a popular tourist destination even at that time—at least for wealthy aristocrats. Comte Rodolphe Festetics de Tolna, an Austro-Hungarian born in Paris and married to a wealthy California heiress, began an eight-year voyage around the world in 1893 on his 76-ton yacht *Le Tolna*. After visiting Sydney they headed for the Solomon Islands and visited Santa Cruz, Santa Ana, Choiseul, New Georgia and the Shortland Islands (Festetics de Tolna 1903). De Tolna's visit to the islands is more than an interesting appendage to history. He made a considerable collection of artefacts from the Western Pacific that he took back to France and made some of the earliest photographic images of the islands and the islanders.

However, the Royal Navy was so concerned for the safety of the Count's vessel, which looked very much like a labour recruiting ship, that they had the *Le Tolna* follow them around the islands (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/21/11, 1895: 5–6). As he did not appear to be a man of much tact or diplomacy, or even good common sense, this probably gave de Tolna more protection than he realised. In the long Pacific adventure de Tolna took more than 400 photographs and obtained a large collection of artefacts. The exact number is not known but it exceeded 1,400. When the *Le Tolna* was wrecked, looted and burnt in the Maldives much of the contents of the ship were destroyed but a substantial amount of documentation survived (Boulay 2007). De Tolna's book is a mix of fact and fiction typical of that period. He called it *Chez les Cannibals* to appeal to an audience that could not get enough gruesome stories of the Pacific. In Roviana he met Jean Pascal Pratt whom he called 'le fameux pirate français qui écumait ces mers depuis plusieurs années, faisant la traite et des commerces prohibés': the famous French pirate who scoured these seas for many years, trafficking in prohibited goods. Hiqava was 'le fameux chasseur de têtes, vint solennellement rendre hommage à la femme du chef blanc et déposer ses armes devant elle': the famous head hunter, who solemnly rendered homage to the white female chief—most likely reference to Queen Victoria—and laid his arms before her (Festetics de Tolna 1903: 347, 349). Actually, it was Peter Edmund Pratt who was the principal trafficker in prohibited goods, although his brother was implicated and it is doubtful if Hiqava ever solemnly pledged homage to anyone, let alone Queen Victoria. While on Choiseul, de Tolna joined a head hunting expedition and after a few days returned 'more than a little distressed' (Boulay 2007: 12). Wealthy travellers like de Tolna were slowly adding to an understanding of the islands although often from a perspective coloured by racial bias, a quest for only finding the exotic and strange and in almost complete ignorance of

the cultures they were describing. The *Australian Town and Country Journal* (12 October 1895: 21) published an article on island massacres in the Solomons accompanied by a series of five photographs taken in Roviana that date from this period and may be associated with de Tolna and his travels in the region. The journal article refers briefly to Woodford, who was then Consul in Samoa, and his valuable book on 'native life and character not ascertainable by the ordinary trader or missionary'.

The Samoan imbroglio

When Woodford arrived in Fiji in October 1894 it was at a critical time in the relationships between Germany, England and the United States over control of Samoa, where international diplomacy and local chiefly rights had culminated in two civil wars. The Samoan situation led to some of the most intense diplomatic negotiations in Pacific history. Britain established a consular post in Apia in 1847, the United States in 1853, and Germany in 1861, but by the end of the 19th century commercial rivalry grew between the three powers. The key issue was the copra trade. Godeffroy und Sohn had established early trading posts in a number of Pacific islands after expanding from the original Valparaiso agency. The trading post in Samoa became the jewel in the crown of German commercial enterprise in the Western Pacific and Apia became an entrepôt for trade in coconut oil, turtle shell and pearl shell. Theodor Weber and other agents expanded the commercial operations with the purchase of plantation land, but it was Weber's invention of kiln dried coconut kernel that retained the essential coconut oils that led to widespread plantation expansion.

The dried copra was exported to Europe for use in soap and candles, and the residue was turned into cattle feed. This made operations semi-industrialised and more commercially viable than relying on native produced sun-dried copra which was poor in quality and unreliable in quantity. Godeffroy agents demonstrated the superior kiln drying techniques and encouraged islanders to use this method. This was part of Weber's commercial success. The German plantation economy, largely controlled by the Godeffroy firm, assumed as much as 70 per cent of commerce in the South Pacific (Kennedy 1972: 263). Godeffroy agents also sent artefacts from around the Pacific back to the Hamburg headquarters and these formed part of the famous Godeffroy Museum. When the firm later collapsed many of the 3,000 objects in the museum were sold off to other institutions in Germany and Europe, including the Museum of Ethnography in Leipzig. A collection of Australian and Pacific insects was obtained by the Museum of Victoria in Melbourne (Scheps 2005). The Godeffroy museum director, Johann Schmeltz, was a keen collector of human skulls from the Pacific and these were sold at profit to scientific institutions and museums

across the world at a time when anthropometry was a major study (Buschmann 2000: 59). Even while dealing in the trade of artefacts and natural history, Godeffroy made it clear in business, and in his dealings over cultural and natural history, that the company was in the region for commercial gain and not moral justification (Bollard 1981: 5). The firm was willing to offer more credit to islanders than the inefficient, capital starved British traders, and although they charged higher rates of interest, they took land as security. The Godeffroy trade stores were also prepared to sell islanders arms and ammunition, alcohol and virtually anything else profitable.

Rapidly, independent agencies operating under the Godeffroy name were established throughout Samoa, Tonga, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and in time extended as far as New Britain, New Ireland, and the Duke of York Islands (Bollard 1981: 4). Another profitable concern involved currency manipulation. Before the establishment of the gold standard and widespread use of the English pound sterling, Godeffroy und Sohn imported debased silver coin, mostly Spanish dollars brought cheaply in Valparasio. This was used as currency in many Pacific communities with the flow of money controlled by the Godeffroy head office. Currency bought at discounted value in South America purchased copra from islanders. When the islanders went into Godeffroy trade stores to buy goods they were then charged at the nominal face value of the coin with a resulting profit to the firm (Bollard 1981: 10–11). After Britain annexed Fiji in 1874 and subjected previous land transactions by early German settlers to close scrutiny, German commercial interests in the Pacific were seen by Berlin as under threat from British political moves. German traders looked anxiously at the situation in Samoa and Weber petitioned Bismarck, the German Chancellor, to claim Samoa as a German protectorate. Bismarck refused on the grounds that administering a colony in the Pacific would be expensive. Bismarck wrote on Weber's scheme: 'It all costs money' (Kennedy 1972: 265).

The severe economic depression that followed the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871 caused the financial collapse of Godeffroy und Sohn when the company speculated on the volatile German currency market (Bollard 1981: 16). The new trading company, Deutsche Handels-und Plantagen-Gesellschaft der Südsee-Inseln zu Hamberg (DHPG) formed in 1878 and assumed management of the profitable Samoan interests. The main threats to German commercial interests in Samoa were seen to be annexation of the islands by a foreign power such as England, irregular or curtailed labour recruitment for the Samoan plantations, and the unsatisfactory government of Susuga Malietoa Laupepa, the Samoan King. The problem for both the Germans and the British was that while Laupepa was pro-English, the Vice-King, Tupua Tamasese Titimaea, was pro-German. In 1883 and again in 1884, Laupepa petitioned Queen Victoria to make Samoa a British protectorate but these offers were refuted by the Colonial Office. In 1885,

to force the abdication of Laupepa, German marines from the man-of-war SMS *Albatos* landed in Apia and proclaimed Titimaea the Samoan King. The action of the marines and Weber's involvement in Samoan politics were of considerable embarrassment to Bismarck at a time when Germany and Britain were in the middle of sensitive diplomatic negotiations over the question of spheres of influence in New Guinea. While Thurston, the chief British negotiator, privately supported German administration of the Samoan islands it was officially opposed by the British government (Kennedy 1972: 270, 274).

The political situation rapidly deteriorated. In 1887 Laupepa was exiled to the German occupied Marshall Islands and replaced by Titimaea with German military backing and support from his aristocratic Sa Tupua followers. Titimaea insulted Samoan cultural protocols and this sparked opposition from the aristocratic Sa Malietoa families. The next year, Malietoa Laupepa's kinsman, Tupua Malietoa To'oa Mata'afa Iosefo, assembled a force of rebels and commenced military action against the German settlers and plantation owners. Iosefo was supported by the Scottish writer, Robert Louis Stevenson, then resident at Vailima on 'Upolu, and this further angered Thurston in Suva who had a particular dislike for Stevenson and his Pacific romanticism. During this rebellion the German consul and the German naval commander in Apia declared martial law.

During this Samoan debacle, Germany and Britain signed the 1886 accord which partitioned eastern New Guinea into British New Guinea and German New Guinea (Woodford papers PMB 1381/035a; see Whittaker *et al.* 1975: Documents D26–D36). German New Guinea included the northern Solomon Islands, but the most important gain for Germany was Bougainville and the neighbouring island of Buka. It was with this agreement that Britain reluctantly and unenthusiastically gained the right to declare a protectorate over the southern Solomon Islands. DHPG profitably gained access to the rich labour recruiting grounds of the Bismarck Archipelago and the northern Solomons, no doubt with much cheering among the powerful colonialist lobby groups in Berlin (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons 1886a). Not only were the islands seen as good recruiting grounds but Germany also gained access to the fine Shortland Harbour at Alu and much plantation land as well. Because the German traders were not constrained by the British firearms prohibition of 1887 that regulated sale of guns and dynamite, firearms and ammunition were dispersed widely through customary trading linkages from the northern into the southern Solomon islands (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1887a).

By 1890 much of the Western Pacific had been carved up among the major European powers. Nevertheless, after 1888 the situation in Samoa again deteriorated. An attack on German sailors by Mata'afa Iosefo's forces led to his

defeat, although this action was one of the catalysts for the negotiations leading to the Berlin Treaty of 1889. Few countries in the Pacific, in relative proportion to size and economic importance, generated as much inter-governmental correspondence as the affairs of Samoa at this time (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons 1889). At a conference in Berlin, Germany renounced any exclusive rights to Samoa based on commercial predominance and recognised the equality of rights of Britain and the United States that had by now built a naval base in Pago Pago after signing a bilateral treaty with the Tutuila chiefs (Kennedy 1972: 281). The three colonial contenders established the tripartite administration of Samoa under the Final Act of the Berlin Samoan Conference of 1889. This treaty was ratified in 1890 (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons 1890; Bevans 1968: 116–128). The condominium arrangements in place between 1890 and 1899 were attempts at remedying the crisis-prone imbalance of power existing between German, British and American interests. However, the arrangements lacked coercive powers and moral authority to succeed. The competing European interest groups only exacerbated the internal divisions in Samoan society for they nominated kings unacceptable to the strongest Samoan factions of the time (Campbell 2005: 67). The colonial governments lacked legitimacy. They were constituted by non-Samoans with little understanding of the internal dynamics of local communities and the condominium government itself was eroded by poor relations between Britain and Germany after the Jameson Raid in the Transvaal and by suspicions between the United States and Germany over strategic competition (Ellison 1939: 263). German colonial aspirations in Samoa were commercial. The United States saw its presence in Pago Pago as a defence position that would secure the neutralisation of the South Pacific in the same way that the military presence in Hawai'i neutralised the northern Pacific (Ide 1899). The American concept of neutralisation really meant maintaining the security of trade routes between the west coast of the United States, the Asian markets then recently opened to trade and the Australian colonies at a time of rapid growth during and after the Australian and Californian gold rushes (Anderson 1978: 45).

The condominium arrangements created administrative chaos. The Berlin Act established a municipality of Apia governed by a council of six non-Samoan members elected by the taxpayers and a President nominated by the three powers but appointed by the Samoan government. The Supreme Court was presided over by a Chief Justice and a three member Lands Commission was created. But the three consuls, German, English and American, could advise the President independent of the Apia council. The Samoan government, headed by the King, was officially autonomous but had little real power and no financial control (Heath 1974a: 39–41). The settler-controlled governments operated behind a Samoan façade. Again, the state of affairs in Samoa continued to be the subject of much diplomatic correspondence during this time (Great Britain.

Parliament. House of Commons 1893–1894). Henry Clay Ide, the American appointed to the post of Chief Justice between 1893 and 1897, would later write scathingly of German involvement in Samoan affairs while neglecting to comment on British involvement. He re-emphasised the fundamental purpose of the American presence in the islands as both strategic and, for Ide at least, moral. He wrote: 'Every other important group in the South Seas has been seized and appropriated by some foreign Government. Samoa was the only foothold open to us'. Furthermore, he stated: 'we cannot afford to make the slightest relaxation of the rights in Samoa that have been secured to us by the Berlin Treaty. "The white man's burden" in Samoa rests as heavily upon German shoulders as upon those of England and America' (Ide 1899: 686; Anderson 1978). Ide was certainly promoting America's Pacific destiny but he at least had the sense to call his paper 'The Imbroglia in Samoa', for indeed the political situation was a confused and muddled mess (Ide 1899).

Woodford's role in Samoan politics

Between 1890 and 1899 Samoa remained the victim of international rivalry that only further exacerbated the internal factionalism of Samoan chiefs. Mata'afa Iosefo was detained and exiled to the German Marshall Islands in 1893 following further civil unrest (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 7/60 and PMB 1381/019ix). A new rebel group then emerged in the rural areas loyal to Tupua Tamasese Lealofi-o-a'ana, the son of Titimaea. Thurston in Fiji was in a difficult administrative position at this critical time. The wife of the British Consul at Apia, Thomas Cusack-Smith, had recently died and Cusack-Smith himself was in poor health and requested leave (Foreign Office to Colonial Office 28 November 1894 CO 225 46 20667). Thurston needed to appoint an acting Consul. Despite the rather unfavourable opinion held by senior colonial officials of him during his brief employment in the Fijian service in 1883 and 1884, Woodford was the only man available in Suva. Both the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office considered the Municipal Magistrate of Apia, Mr Cooper, the only other local replacement, as unacceptable to the various factions. An officer from Fiji was requested (Foreign Office to Colonial Office 12 December 1894 CO 225 46 21621 and telegram 8 December 1894 CO 225 46 21332). Woodford believed that he would be offered the Resident Commissioner's position in the Solomon Islands on completion of satisfactory service in Apia and readily accepted (Heath 1974a: 37–38). As a result, Woodford was appointed as Acting British Consul and Deputy Commissioner in Apia on 24 December 1894 in a letter from Thurston with a certificate of appointment signed by Wilfred Collet following on 29 December (Woodford papers PMB 1381/008e–f).

His position was not well defined either by the Colonial Office in London nor by Thurston in Fiji although both aimed to secure peace and avoid unfavourable criticism by maintaining the status quo. But even the status quo was hard to define. In fact Woodford was advised by letter to 'do as little as possible during your temporary tenure' and not to be hurried into precipitous actions (Woodford papers PMB 1381/008e). Thurston advised Woodford that he would receive no consular salary while in Apia apart from his pay as an Acting Deputy Commissioner although his expenses, presumably including housing and allowances, would be covered from the consulate funds. The rules of engagement were vague. Thurston was opposed to any expansionism from New Zealand and wanted to avoid any quarrels with the Australian colonies but both Australia and New Zealand were uneasy over German politics in the Pacific. Most concern was expressed over German economic moves into the region for the government in Berlin was actively supporting the commercial aspirations of DHPG. The Americans were formulating their own version of a Pacific destiny by meddling in local affairs (Anderson 1978).

Woodford was keen for Samoa to be annexed by Great Britain. One of his first actions after arriving in Apia was to confiscate a shipment of 120 rifles hidden in hollowware and 25,000 cartridges of ammunition in paint tins destined for forces in Samoa loyal to the Germans (Woodford to Thurston 28 January 1895, WPHC 4/IV 30/1895; 20 February 1895 WPHC 4/IV 76/1895; Heath 1974a: 42–43). The arms and ammunition was seized, shipped to Sydney and then dumped off Sydney Heads (Thurston to Ripon 12 February 1895 enclosing Woodford to Thurston 28 January 1895 CO 225 47 5561). These weapons most likely originated in Australia. Sydney was the main source of supply for munitions illegally shipped across the Western Pacific on private and chartered vessels (Thurston to Duff, Governor of New South Wales, 28 February 1895 and Thurston to Ripon 12 February 1895 CO 225 47 5562). The problem was compounded by arms brought into Samoa by men returning from Fiji, but this was more difficult to control (Woodford to Thurston 22 March 1895 WPHC 4/IV 104/1895).

The petty internecine disputes between the colonial officials in Apia were the subject of Woodford's detailed monthly reports to Thurston and the Foreign Office but Woodford had a serious falling out with the American Consul, J. A. Mulligan, over American support for the rebel groups of Tupua Tamasese Lealofi-o-a'ana. When Laupepa, who had returned from exile in 1889, again offered to cede Samoa to Britain, it appeared that Woodford had achieved his goal but Laupepa did not speak for all Samoans. Woodford then arranged a reconciliation meeting between Laupepa and Lealofi-o-a'ana in 1895 (see Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/23 draft speech to Samoan chiefs concerning peace negotiations). This was reported in the Australian and Samoan newspapers although the

Samoa Times (7 September 1895) was not especially complimentary about Woodford's actions, primarily because the editor considered Lealofi-o-a'ana a rebel who should not have been accorded any privileges (Woodford papers PMB 1381/019vi, 1381/019x and PMB 1290 Items 9/37 & 9/37/11). The editor assumed, sarcastically, that Woodford was no doubt driven by 'public good and not for personal aggrandisement only'. The *Brisbane Courier* (12 September 1895: 5) also speculated, '[w]hat effect the event will have on the political situation in Samoa can only be conjectured. In some quarters the reconciliation is believed to be merely a hollow pretence'. The rapprochement between the two Samoan chiefs was resented by Consul Mulligan and it was, in the light of future events, politically insignificant. German commercial activity in Samoa continued. German labour boats retained access to the recruiting grounds in the Gilbert Islands and the northern Solomons. In less than five years Britain would renounce any claims over Samoa in exchange for these northern Solomon Islands.

DHPG reorganised its Pacific operations in 1890s and reduced its number of trading agencies. The profitable ones in Tonga and the Bismarck Archipelago remained and in Samoa German plantations totalled 7,800 acres with 7,000 planted for copra. These commercial plantations in Samoa produced more than 2,000 tons of copra a year, a further 1,000 tons came from native plantations. Woodford remained convinced that 'Polynesian natives (using the word in its true sense and not as generally applied in Fiji) of these low coral islands are unsuited for the hard plantation work demanded of them ... they rapidly fall away and die' (Heath 1974a: 47). He inspected a German plantation where Gilbertese workers had gone on strike but found their conditions satisfactory. He conversed with them in Fijian and their complaints concerning a preference for salt beef over fresh beef were resolved. The Gilbertese, called 'lazy, sulky, and subject to occasional outbursts of passion', were not considered good workers by the Germans (Woodford to Thurston 11 July 1895, WPHC 4/IV 235/1895; Woodford to Salisbury 8 August 1895 CO 225 49 17053 and Woodford to Berkeley 11 July 1895 CO 225 49 18391). He was also opposed to the capitation tax equivalent to 4 shillings per head per year imposed on all Samoans that had to be paid in copra not cash. On the other hand DHPG paid a capitation tax of 8 shillings per head in cash on the indentured labourers brought in to work their plantations. The capitation tax was designed to force native copra production.

In April 1895, Woodford wrote the annual Consular report on trade and finance of Samoa for 1894 that was submitted to Lord Kimberley at the Foreign Office (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Items 8/6 copies at 8/12 & 8/22). In this he wrote that the unrest in the islands was fermented by the small European population that consisted of only 400 people in a community of 30,000 Samoans. Trade had been impacted 'in consequence of the wretchedly unsettled state of the

country' and as a consequence of this London was informed that local Samoans had neglected their communal gardens 'and steal from anyone who happens to be the fortunate, or unfortunate, possessor of anything eatable' (Great Britain. Foreign Office 1895: 14). The civil unrest had seen government revenues decline. Because the gardens were unproductive local people had to buy imported foods and consequently both imports of foodstuffs and exports of plantation copra had shown a marked rise. The increased trade figures therefore were indirectly due to the unsatisfactory state of local politics. The domestic disturbances as well as a regular steamer service to Sydney had made it possible for Australian traders to sell goods to Apia stores.

Despite the turmoil, tourism was adding to the local economy. Woodford noted that Samoans made money from posing for photographs and the sale of 'native curiosities' (Great Britain. Foreign Office 1895: 2; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/6). In fact, at this time many studio photographs of half-dressed Polynesian women with exotic captions were circulating in the islands and these were collected, reprinted and republished extensively (see Burnett 1911; Thomas 1992: 369). His report was surprisingly comprehensive for an Acting Consul with limited experience. Undoubtedly his time in Samoa was a probationary period but he appears to have passed with satisfactory reports both from some members of the press and from the Foreign Office in London. H. Perry Anderson of the Foreign Office wrote a personal note to Woodford to say he had been directed by the Marquess of Salisbury—the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary—following a report by Consul Cusack-Smith, to convey 'his entire approval of your proceedings while in charge of Her Majesty's Consulate in Apia' (Woodford papers PMB 1381/016h). A personal letter directed by the Prime Minister, who was also the Foreign Secretary, to a temporary official in the Western Pacific was a significant gesture. But when Woodford returned to Suva in September 1895 he was forced to accept a clerical position in the Western Pacific High Commission. While disappointed he was at least in Suva and not in London. In the meantime he was appointed as Stipendiary Magistrate of Nadroga province in the Sigatoka district of Viti Levu (Woodford papers PMB 1381/008g). Woodford's eyes were on the prize: the Solomon Islands. First he had to convince the Colonial Office of the need to finance the position of Resident Commissioner.

In Samoa, the situation declined further following the deaths of Titimaea in 1891 and Laupepa in 1898. The second Samoan civil war and the siege of Apia resulted in the return to Samoa of the exiled Mata'afa Iosefo, but another candidate for the position of King appeared, the son of Malietoa Laupepa, Susuga Malietoa Tanumafili I. Samoan forces loyal to Mata'afa Iosefo ambushed British and American naval men and decapitated the slain sailors (Ellison 1939: 267). Reaction to the murders was bitter. Newspapers in the United States, England

and Germany denounced the actions of the great powers in Samoa as interfering, threatening and blustering, calling it the 'Samoa fiasco' (Chambers to Foreign Office 18 February 1899 CO 225 57 1480 Report by William Lea Chambers, Chief Justice of Samoa). At the height of the civil unrest in Apia the Kaiser wrote an impolite letter to Queen Victoria, his grandmother, informing her that the British bombardment of Apia 'may in the end lead to bad blood' (Ellison 1939: 276). This led to bitterness at the very top of the social establishment in both London and Berlin.

After years of intrigue and haggling, Britain, Germany and the United States announced a settlement to the Samoan question but Britain and Germany were set on separate paths of diplomacy and colonialism. These paths were to cross over other areas away from the Pacific, notably in South Africa. The Samoan debacle was resolved when the Tripartite Convention, signed on 14 November 1899 and again in Washington on 2 December, resulted in the formal partition of Samoa into a German colony and a United States territory (Scholefield 1919: 176 and see 324–326 for copies of the agreement; see also WPHC 4/IV, 218/1900; Foreign Office to Colonial Office 20 November 1899 CO 225 58 32244). Germany received 'Upolu and Savai'i and the United States took Tutuila and later the Manu'a Group. German newspapers proclaimed a great victory for Germany that had secured 'the cradle of her colonization in the Pacific' (Ellison 1939: 273; Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons 1900; Bevans 1968: 273–277). The German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, was then proclaimed *Tupu Sili o Samoa* (Paramount Chief of Samoa) and Britain surrendered all rights in Samoa in return for the transfer of Tonga, considered a better site for a naval and coaling station. Most importantly for Charles Woodford, who was by then the Resident Commissioner of the Solomon Islands, Britain received the northern Solomon Islands of Choiseul, Isabel and the Shortland Islands. Woodford, on the HMS *Torch*, was then able to raise the British flag on all the northern islands that came under his control. The flag ceremony was held on Isabel, Gower (Dai Is off Malaita), at Ontong Java and Nukumanu, at Fauro, at the Shortland Islands, on Choiseul at Kondakanimboko Island in Choiseul Bay and possibly at Oema Island (*The Brisbane Courier* 14 November 1900: 6; *The Advertiser* [Adelaide] 26 October 1900: 5; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 27 January 1881: 8). The Tripartite Convention was to remain in place for only 14 years. At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, New Zealand forces, assisted by Australian troops, occupied German Samoa. At the same time, Australian troops occupied German New Guinea. With that the German empire in the Western Pacific ended.

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