

## 8. The new social order

Colonial rule is often seen as both coherent and hegemonic but encounters between indigenous peoples and settlers, traders, planters, missionaries and police were marked not only by tension and struggle but also by mutual misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Colonial administration in the Solomon Islands, and in Papua to the west, attempted to impose law and order—through pacification—by using forms of violence adopted from the very societies it sought to transform (Maclean 1998). The process of civilisation was made imperfect by imperfect agents. Many settlers, traders and even many missionaries had only a superficial understanding of their own culture and civilisation. Indeed, history shows that many of these people were fleeing the constraints of their own European society. It was unlikely that they would have had a comprehensive understanding of the rules of civility, law and justice that they sought to transmit to colonised peoples. Imposition of a legal system that argued for a universalist moral obligation to all and impartial justice that emphasised the nature of the wrong rather than the relationship between the offended parties was indeed alien to the Melanesian villager (Maclean 1998: 80).

### Policing the islands

The fact that justice was in the hands of inexperienced, often unknown, junior white district officers made it appear even more contradictory in the eyes of local people. Colonial rule may have been founded on English law but British justice was another matter. Violence, when it erupted, was considered a crisis that required immediate action. When local people resorted to violence it was seen as indigenous agency out of control, but from an indigenous perspective, retaliation, revenge, pay-back, sorcery and retribution were the logical constructs of local polity. As evidenced in stories of the actions of Hiqava of Roviana, his status as a chief and power as a war leader were constructed around his ability to utilise the very qualities that British justice sought to suppress. What was documented in reports and newspaper accounts are the confrontations between two specific forms of violence that had been experimenting with each other for some time (Maclean 1998). What appeared to be a systematic and pervasive penetration of colonial rule in the Solomon Islands was in fact a patchwork of controlled and uncontrolled areas and this patchwork remained in existence for most of the colonial period.

The colonial state was a superficial layer of calm and order. Pacification campaigns and punitive expeditions were the visible and violent responses to the breakdown between indigenous and non-indigenous groups. Violence

was an ever present accompaniment to trade, exchange, labour recruiting, exploration and evangelisation. All these places of contact could become places of conflict. The history of the Solomon Islands is full of examples of contact situations that turned to violence. The imposition of colonial rule in all Melanesian countries followed similar paths: exploration, patrolling, mapping, reporting, regulation, law and punishment, and taxation. All were elements of control and suppression. The wonderment was that a small group of European officials with limited knowledge of the country could pacify the many disparate groups (Maclean 1998: 88). Fundamental to that pacification was a measure of voluntary submission to colonial rule. While the goal of colonial rule was to transform the uncivilised native into the civilised wage labourer, the strategy employed was conservative. Traditional lifestyles, values and attitudes were retained while the veneer was retouched from pagan to Christian, savage to civilised. But some colonial goals also conformed to village goals, for communal life was directed by a conservative gerontocracy that blended with the imposed conservatism of the new social and religious order.

The way to govern colonial dependencies was part of an ongoing debate about efficient and effective rule that sought to impose centralised control while incorporating structures of local society into a powerful hierarchical and racial form of authority with white officers at the top and local police as the agents of power (Lattas and Rio 2011: 3). In Polynesian societies, with inherent hierarchical structures of chiefly power and authority where taboos, traditions and a complex cosmology governed daily life, the use of local power structures by colonial governments was less complex. In Melanesian societies Big-man and semi-hereditary chiefly structures were unstable, even volatile, and local power structures could not be relied upon to support colonial administrations. In the Western Pacific the protectorates were de facto colonies where the colonial power established internal administrative structures and controlled external, territorial and financial affairs. European patrol officers were supported by indigenous police selected from areas other than those in which they served. This established a cost-effective system of policing, but the local police used a culture of fear as a way of managing crime. This was little different from the power of violence and physical threats that allowed warrior leaders and Big-men to maintain control over local people. Extrajudicial punishments frequently characterised police arrests and interrogations and this technique of governing Melanesia now has a long history. It was used in the early colonial periods as part of armed police action when confronted with villagers who resisted or who were considered too pig-headed or too stubborn to understand directions. It formed part of the 'primitivist constructions that underpinned colonial race-class relations and state power' that has not disappeared (Lattas and Rio 2011: 10).

Following punitive raids and the capture of war leaders the Australian press often ran pictorial features and long descriptive articles describing the process of 'civilization' in the islands. The *Queenslander* (13 August 1910: 8, 22, 27 August 1910: 8, 3 September 1910: 24, 17 September 1910: 24 and 1 October 1910: 7, 22) published articles by the author 'Sketcher' with illustrated supplements under the headline *The Mysterious Solomons* that were poorly disguised sales pitches for plantation investment (Perkins and Quanchi 2010; Quanchi 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007). These articles give useful facts and figures taken from government reports and the illustrated full page supplements document many important people and places. The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* (April 1910, Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/30) called the Solomon Islands the 'Richest in the Pacific'. The article called Tulagi a civilised centre but then described islands full of fever and head hunters in long swift war canoes. For those venturing to invest in the islands, the article detailed the current rates of pay for white labourers and white sailors and compared them, in favour of the whites, with the contracted plantation labourer's salary set by order at £6 a year, with keep. This had been the standard contract payment for labourers since the late 1880s. By 1910 experienced domestic servants and labourers with skills could ask for up to £12 a year.

Missionaries and traders became agents of government pacification on the frontier. Woodford and his administration have been condemned for their use of force and the resulting 'massive overkill' (Bennett 1987: 109) but clearly the government saw it as a necessity to pacify the islands before European settlement could be encouraged and a plantation economy started. 'Woodford clearly saw "pacification" as both an end in itself and a necessary pre-condition to the promotion of large-scale European development' (Heath 1979: 98). Following the first attempts at securing the killers of Burns the *Sydney Morning Herald* (3 October 1908: 14) ran an anonymous article replying to the criticisms of the Solomon Islands administration. Said to be an interview with a 'prominent authority on island questions, who is intimately acquainted with the position in the Solomons', it reads very much like an interview with Walter Lucas. Given that the article was a criticism of Faddy, and indirectly the Lever's workers in general, it would not be surprising if it were written by someone connected with Burns Philp. The article stated that the only effective method of securing control in the islands was the establishment of a native police force with white officers along the lines of the system operating in Papua. Woodford was described as

a man well acquainted with the habits of the natives, for he has long resided in the group. Many years ago he spent a good deal of time in the Solomons as a naturalist before taking up his present official position. He is a quiet, resourceful, level-headed man who can be firm in action

without becoming hysterical or being led into errors of judgement. Given an effective police system he may be relied upon to establish a wholesome respect for law and order.

There was much discussion between the High Commission and the Colonial Office about the establishment of an effective Solomon Islands police force made up of recruits from Tanna in the New Hebrides, Fijians, Gurkhas or even Pathan tribesmen (Mahaffy to High Commission 26 April 1911 WPHC 4/IV 831/1908). None of this eventuated. Mahaffy did submit a memorandum on the development of a local force in which he clarified that the six men brought from Fiji in 1897 were indeed Solomon Islanders who spoke Fijian and had been trained in Fiji. These men also served as Woodford's boat crew in the early days. It was found that the crews of visiting naval ships, the 'Bluejackets', were not a success in land-based policing. The climate, hilly terrain and language difficulties meant the sailors could not penetrate far from the shore. When the *Lahloo* was purchased and Gizo established, Mahaffy recruited 25 men from Malaita, Savo, Isabel and Guadalcanal. They were trained to use the Martini Henry rifles. These men used the confiscated *tomoko* for transport, were highly mobile, easily fed and accustomed to local conditions. Six police were stationed at Tulagi. Later Edge-Partington trained another 25 police to work on Malaita. Heffernan recruited six to work on the Shortland Islands but also trained a militia of volunteers who carried tomahawks instead of guns. When punitive campaigns were mounted the district magistrates raised a levy of local men from the labourers employed by planters and traders. These militia groups were used, to little success and much antagonism, on Vella Lavella and Malaita (Mahaffy to High Commission [undated] 1910 WPHC 4/IV 831/1908).

## **Murder of Oliver Burns: The beginning of the end of the pacification campaigns**

Two significant punitive actions signalled the end of the pacification period in New Georgia. The first followed the murder of Oliver Burns, a trading agent of Norman Wheatley, killed in Jae Passage in Marovo Lagoon in May 1908 in retaliation for the imprisonment of Ara the brother of Lela, a local chief (Jackson 1978: 175). Ara committed suicide in Tulagi jail and Lela sought the head of a white man in compensation. Burns was on his schooner, the *Heela*, when he was attacked and killed along with members of his crew. The murders were reported widely in the Australian newspapers especially as the first punitive expedition in July 1908 failed to secure the killers despite having logistical support from Lever Brothers and use of their schooner *Leueneuwa*. This was led by an acting government officer, Arthur Sykes, the Inspector of Labour,

and consisted of traders and their labourers. The presence of the Methodist missionaries, Reginald Nicholson and Ernest Shackell, was believed to moderate the behaviour of the white traders although the punitive party destroyed or captured some war canoes and whaleboats (*The Advertiser* [Adelaide] 3 August 1908; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 23 June 1908: 7, 30 June 1908: 7, 8 September 1908: 7; *The Brisbane Courier* 3 August 1908: 5).

The administration then came under intense criticism for its failure to protect traders in the Marovo Lagoon. First, Walter Henry Lucas, having returned from a tour of inspection of the Solomon Islands Development Co. stated that the prosperity of the islands was imperilled by the 'defiant and menacing natives' (*The Brisbane Courier* 3 August 1908: 5). Burns, Philp & Co, under Lucas's direction, then made the steamer *Makambo* available to Woodford to transport a second punitive party to Marovo. C. B. Faddy, the Trade Department Manager of Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd stationed in the Marovo Lagoon, also attacked the government stating that the 'administration is a disgrace to the whole country ... I have had to carry a revolver in case of an attack by the natives, who might come at any moment' and he was reported to be carrying 'three years' pent-up disgust' at the way murderers of white traders had been allowed to escape justice (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2 October 1908: 7). The Oliver Burns case was but one of a number of murders of whites then mentioned by Faddy. Woodford came under personal criticism for finding against a white resident who had shot a local man. Faddy considered it most inappropriate that this white resident was forbidden to hold a recruiting license, not permitted to recruit any local man for his plantation or to have any local man employed on any vessel that he owned. This white resident must have been connected to Lever's plantations for the incident in question occurred on their schooner *Leueneuwa*. According to Faddy, and this would have had support from Lever's management, the German administration's tough approach to labour discipline in the Bismarck Archipelago was the standard to follow. Faddy had a speech impediment that local warriors considered a sign of spiritual possession and so he was spared from attack. When he found out that he was a possible target for retribution, presumably the speech impediment no longer having any effect, he made his escape to Sydney (Burnett 1911: 107–110; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/29).

What followed in Marovo was a second, larger punitive expedition. Woodford and the crew of HMS *Cambrian* went to Marovo Lagoon to search for the murderers of Burns and the looters of his schooner. The *Cambrian* was on a regular patrol of the region. Everard im Thurn, the High Commissioner, had joined the ship in Suva and been taken to the New Hebrides to finalise the details of the Anglo-French Condominium so Woodford requested the ship be sent on to the islands (*Auckland Star* 15 September 1908: 5). The crew of the

man-of-war first attempted to arrest the murderers of Captain Mackenzie who had been killed at Langa Langa Lagoon on the north-west coast of Malaita. When 75 marines and officers could not secure the murderers the ship shelled the crowd of men jeering the crew from the shore. The expedition of the *Cambrian* in Marovo Lagoon was also unsuccessful. Six of the ship's whaleboats cruised the lagoon in heavy rain and found that the local people 'being prepared for the visit left absolutely nothing that could be destroyed' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 8 September 1908: 7).

When plantation stores were plundered by the killers of Burns some time later in December 1908, Woodford returned to Marovo. This time on the government steamer *Belama* with District Magistrates NS Heffernan and Thomas Edge-Partington, a Shortland Islander militia and the trader Norman Wheatley. They raided gardens, burnt houses and in Woodford's own words: 'The lesson inflicted ... has been a severe one' (Bennett 1987: 107 quoting Woodford to Major 11 January 1909 WPHC 4/IV 261/1908; Hviding 1996: 113, 119). The criminal statistics report for 1909 notes that a 'punitive expedition against the natives of Marovo Lagoon, for the murder of a white man and the subsequent plundering of a trading station, was undertaken in December 1908. Thirteen large canoes were destroyed and eight of the guilty party were killed' (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1909: 23).

Despite Wheatley being party to the punitive expedition the people from Jae Passage fled to the safety of his trading station near Ramata Island in Querasi Lagoon north of the main lagoon. They only returned after 1912. The police later captured the men believed to be involved in the murder of Burns. One man had been a locally engaged crewmember of the HMS *Pegasus* and was called 'Launchy' by the other crew. His real name was Lanasi. While settler and trader opinion was that he was the killer of Burns it could have been yet another case of a surrogate handed to the administration in place of senior chiefs or war leaders. Another culprit in the murder was Ngatu, the son of a chief (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 March 1910: 10; Bennett 1987: 116). Norman Wheatley used his influence to secure the apprehension of Ngatu and another man, Kama Gora (Burnett 1911: 144). After a period in prison on Tulagi, and his release secured by Rev John Goldie, Ngatu converted to Christianity. Following baptism as Ishmael, Ngatu then became a senior elder in the Methodist church, a District Headman and chief. During the Second World War he was part of a group of local men who passed information about Japanese troop movements to Coastwatchers on New Georgia (Bennett 1987: 244 and 290; Hviding 1996: 113, 119).

## The raid on Vella Lavella and the capture of Zito Latavaki

The capture of Zito Latavaki (Sito) was a case of overzealous, ill-disciplined police action. Jean Pascal Pratt had been attacked by the war chief, Zito, over a failed illegal arms deal in 1897 but he was not captured until 1909. Following the attack on Pratt, Zito had gone into hiding on the Mbilua coast of Vella Lavella but he continued to be a presence in the area. The first punitive operation that sought to capture Zito was led by Mahaffy in November 1901 (Mahaffy to Woodford 15 November 1901 WPHC 4/IV 41/1902 contains two hand drawn maps). This party consisted of Norman Wheatley, Thomas Woodhouse, Joseph Binskin and a new District Officer, William Hazelton. It also had a support group of 32 police and 14 volunteers mostly from Simbo, Kolombangara, Roviana, and some even from Vella Lavella itself. On the eastern coast they raided villages, burnt Zito's canoes and shot pigs. When they arrived at Mbilua, Zito's fortified village, the people had fled but all 20 houses were burnt. Mahaffy then led raids on the western coast villages. In all 10 villages were destroyed, 100 canoes burnt or confiscated and Zito driven from his Mbilua hideout.

Following this incident Joseph Binskin secured a lease over 1,000 acres on the north coast of Bagga (Mbava/Bagha) Island off the coast of Vella Lavella in 1901 (Woodford to O'Brien 25 December 1901 WPHC 4/IV 35a/1902). Binskin was well respected locally but he was implicated in the punitive expedition on Mbilua that had caused such destruction. A second raid on Mbilua was led by District Magistrate Thomas Edge-Partington in 1908. This consisted of a large party of 'undisciplined Malaitan militia', local traders and white officers who scoured Vella Lavella for two weeks searching for Zito's supporters (Dureau 1998: 211). The Malaitan militia raided sacred shrines and destroyed villages (Burnett 1911: 152). Zito's wife and daughter were killed in this attack. In a revenge attack, Zito sent his men to Bagga Island to kill Binskin's Malaitan wife Unga and his two young daughters. Binskin was away from his trading station at the time. His unpublished diary records his many trading voyages around the New Georgia Islands but gives only brief details of the murder of his family and almost no information on the events that followed. The only direct remark was: 'I had to go & force the Government to come on this raid. [They] did not want to do it' (Binskin 1909; *The Advertiser* [Adelaide] 20 May 1910: 7; *The Mercury* [Hobart] 27 May 1910: 7)

An even larger expedition took place on the return of Woodford from leave in England in 1909. Wheatley, Binskin and a force of more than 200 volunteers, police, white officers and rival clansmen captured three of the ring-leaders—Tongava, Pakobatu and Pekumbessa—but only after local people assisted the police. Zito escaped to Kolombangara (*The Argus* 5 January 1910: 8; *The*

*Advertiser* [Adelaide] 5 January 1910: 10). He was handed over to Norman Wheatley who took him to Gizo police station. 17 people were killed in this punitive expedition and 12 arrested and jailed (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 5 March 1910: 10). Rev R. C. Nicholson of the Methodist Foreign Mission—he had by now established a mission on Vella Lavella—was critical of the police actions, in particular of the native militia raid of the Methodist mission stations and gardens. Rev John Goldie wrote to Woodford and complained of the damage done to the missions and as a result some of the police party were charged. As a result of the Zito campaign Goldie considered that the 'Methodist Mission stood between the people of the western Solomons and their exploitation, even destruction, at the hands of the traders and government officials' (Hilliard 1966: 326).

Briskin took charge of Zito's associates, Pakobatu and Pekumbessa, when they were captured but they were later found dead in the jail on Gizo. They had died from beatings inflicted by native police (Hilliard 1966: 270). Joseph Binskin was investigated for the deaths of the two men while in his custody, but following hearings on Mbava Island, he was not charged as an accessory. He remarried in 1910 and his second wife, Florence, was the daughter of Norman Wheatley and his Roviana-born wife Nautele (Bennett 1987: 180–181 Table 5 and 1987: 74: Photos 6 and 7). Florence married Binskin when she was only 17. They returned to Mbava where Florence remained, apart from some years in Sydney in the 1950s, for the rest of her life. Joseph Binskin died in 1941 and Florence in 1972 (Smith 1971; *The Australian Women's Weekly* 14 April 1971: 28; Boutilier 1975: 29).

The entire episode raised concerns about the value of the ongoing punitive actions. Bitter memories of Malaitan participation in the Zito affair surfaced long after when Malaitans and westerner islanders came into contact in Honiara (Dureau 1998: 211 and 215). Zito was tried for murder at Tulagi by Charles Major, the Chief Judicial Commissioner of the Western Pacific High Commission, who was taken to the Solomon Islands on the HMS *Pegasus* to hear these cases (WPHC 2/VI Item 4; *The Brisbane Courier* 28 May 1910: 4). However, both Zito and Tongava were acquitted for the only witness was the young Binskin child who had survived the attack and Major found the police evidence inconclusive. But Zito and Tongava were considered too important or too dangerous to release back into their communities and so they were sent to jail in Suva on other charges (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 16 June 1910: 8). It was later reported that Zito had died in jail (*Examiner* [Launceston] 27 December 1911: 2).

A second trial held by Chief Judicial Commissioner in Tulagi sentenced Lanasi to death for the murder of the trader Oliver Burns (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 16 June 1910: 8; *The Morning Bulletin* [Rockhampton] 21 June 1910: 5). Following the capture of Zito on Vella Lavella, the Binskin attacks and the murder of Oliver Burns, the High Commission in Suva was convinced that the Protectorate faced many difficulties without a Resident Judicial Officer. The Chief Judicial

Commissioner, located in Suva, was dependent on transport from the Royal Navy and this delayed his movements. Charles Major also had a poor opinion of Australian traders and planters in general and he strongly condemned the use of vigilante groups. He wrote to im Thurn: 'how very difficult it is to control this class of Australian, and if a gross miscarriage of justice should occur in the case of these murders it will be certain that we may expect a crop of crimes on the part of the people who will take the law into their hands' (Boutilier 1983: 62 quoting Major to im Thurn 8 March 1910 WPHC 4/IV 1121/1909). In 1911 the Resident Commissioner was given judicial powers but Woodford, and the Protectorate administration in general, came under savage criticism for the handling of the Binskin case from Frank Burnett, a Canadian traveller, photographer and writer.

## ***Through Polynesia and Papua***

Burnett was an itinerant travel writer, photographer and amateur ethnographer who wrote four books on his travels in the Pacific. They are all examples of the common genre then fashionable for illustrated travel narratives (Thomas 1992: 369). While commonly regarded as peripheral, unreliable sources of information on social and cultural issues, Burnett's books provide a useful backdrop to the local politics in the islands at that time. His book, *Through Polynesia and Papua* (1911), contains more than 100 pages of action packed drama recording his time in the Solomon Islands. He stayed for nearly a year with Norman Wheatley at Lambete plantation on the Munda coast. It is obvious that most of the commentary provided by Burnett comes from Wheatley, for the book contains savage criticism of missionaries and the administration. At that time, 1909–1910, Wheatley was in open dispute with the Methodist missions and their expansion into plantation ownership, trading and local politics. Wheatley was a well-regarded trader with good local contacts but he did not like losing trade and influence to the industrial missions.

Burnett saw young Polynesian women with light skins and amorous, uninhibited ways as Island Belles. He emphasised the soft and pliant side of Polynesians and illustrated that with diffused images. Burnett's book contains numerous 'unambiguously sexualized' studio photographs of unnamed, Polynesian women positioned looking away from the viewer and shrouded by exotic foliage (Thomas 1992: 369). These images were of the type purchased from studios or sold to ships' passengers. On the other hand, aggressive Melanesian men were seen as Savages, characterised by their dark skins, confronting direct gaze and hostile manner (Burnett 1911, facing 52; Mayer 2006: 218, 234, 235, 236). They were photographed in their villages, in groups or in natural surroundings. The effect was to show that they were uncivilised and cruel, even somewhat inhuman. Melanesian women were described as socially degraded and portrayed

as physically ugly in comparison with romanticised Polynesian beauties. Burnett's books are a mixture of fact and fiction (Mayer 2006: 237). Burnett (1911: 74–80) wrote: 'there is not much to admire in the Solomon islander ... he is, in fact, a ferocious, treacherous savage, whose principal and most congenial occupation in the past was head hunting'. In his opinion, their houses were dirty, their clothing was poor and they were devil worshippers. Indeed, the place was full of flies and mosquitoes. In common with the general attitudes of the day, Burnett believed that Pacific Islanders and their cultures were doomed to extinction with their customary ways endangered by colonial expansion and missionary conversion. The white traders and settlers were also condemned. They were, collectively, a group of malaria-infected alcoholics.

In Roviana and Marovo Lagoons, Burnett spent a large part of his time collecting artefacts and taking photographs. He bought, at low prices, over 300 objects obtained by some most unsavoury practices. In search of curios, he entered peoples' houses and wrote: 'After ransacking most of the principal houses [in a village off Ramata Island], and securing all the articles I could find that were of any interest to me, such as canoe-gods, spears, shields, and carved shell ornaments, I wandered up to a large "tambo" [*tabu*] house situated on a slight eminence behind the village'. Here he raided the sacred shrines (Burnett 1911: 91–92, 120).

But it is his open condemnation of missionaries and government officers that makes Burnett's book interesting. Burnett (1911: 127) included a photograph, not acknowledged, of a Marau family taken by Walter Henry Lucas that had been published in the Amherst and Thomson volumes (1901, Volume 2: facing 340). He obviously sourced his photographs from many people. His underlying message was that: 'distant islands of "Edenistic" wonder accommodated cannibals and headhunting as customary practice, and whose continued existence colonial expansion and missionary fervour endangered' (Mayer 2006: 223). He found cannibalism and head hunting more colourful than colonialism and Christianity. Of the Methodists in Roviana he stated: 'The mission is a concern apparently conducted as a copra-raising, property-acquiring, and commercial undertaking, incidentally ready to save the soul of any stray heathen who may "happen along", desirous of becoming a faithful worker in the Vineyard of the Lord, or—in other words—Mission Copra Plantation' (Burnett 1911: 95). Burnett was scathing in his criticism of the Binskin affair (Burnett 1911: 158–174).

Of the administration of the British Solomon Island Protectorate he was even more condemnatory:

x am ashamed to say, a protectorate of Great Britain. The administration consists nominally of a Resident Commissioner—who is responsible to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific at Fiji—a collector

of customs, who is also chief postmaster, a labour inspector, and three resident magistrates, two of whom, mere inexperienced youth, are deputy commissioners, by virtue of which latter appointments they are invested with almost unlimited powers, though devoid of any administrative knowledge of ability, and lamentably ignorant of law or legal procedure (Burnett 1911: 130).

Woodford was of course the Resident Commissioner named, and the three District Magistrates were Nesbit Seeley Heffernan, Thomas Edge-Partington and Ralph Brodhurst-Hill. The Labour Inspector at that time was Arthur Tasman Sykes, and the Collector of Customs, Chief Post-master and Health Officer was Frederick Joshua Barnett (Protectorate of British Solomon Islands 1909). After castigating Woodford and Mahaffy, Burnett wrote of N. S. Heffernan, then District Magistrate in the Shortland Islands based at Faisi: 'Embodied in the august person of the youth in charge of this extensive district, are the positions of Assistant Commissioner, District Magistrate, and Postmaster, not one of which—let alone all three—is he fitted to fill. His arrogance is colossal and equalled only by the ignorance he displays of all matters connected with administration' (Burnett 1911: 172). All these men, apart from Sykes, served for many years in the Solomon Islands despite Burnett's very public slander.

Woodford was aggrieved by the attacks on the administration that was called 'incompetent' and a 'disgrace to the British Empire' but was reassured by the High Commission in Suva that both Burnett and his comments could be ignored (Boutilier 1975: 35; Woodford to May 11 February 1912 and 31 May 1912 WPHC 4/IV 577/1912). The book was ridiculed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies who wrote that, while Burnett dedicated the book to his wife, it included 'indecent photographs which he claims to have made himself but which happen to be hawked for sale in Tahiti and Rarotonga' (Jackson 1978: 196). Burnett's book was not well reviewed. *The Field* (10 February 1912) reported the book to be neither well informed nor impartial and told readers that Burnett's 'special bugbear, however, is the missionary, whose faults pervade the book from preface to appendix' and that the illustrations appeared to be selected solely for the purpose of 'depicting natives in various stages of undress' (Woodford papers PMB 1381/009d).

## Everard im Thurn: Colonial governor, explorer and photographer

Everard im Thurn, High Commissioner from 1904 to 1911, played an important role in the development of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. But his poor personal relationship with Woodford has been seen as Woodford's failure

to conform to the rules and dictates of the High Commissioner rather than any errors in judgement of im Thurn himself (Heath 1974a; Bennett 1987). Im Thurn, like Woodford, was a complex and contradictory character. Born in Sydenham, south of London, the son of a Swiss-German father and an English mother, he was from an established family but had a 'meandering career'. Chapelle (1976: 10) considered this to be an indication of impulsiveness and lack of purpose although he too may have been an adventurous young man bored in Victorian England. He was not quite at ease in authority. He was well educated, having studied at Oxford, Edinburgh and Sydney universities. When his father, a merchant banker in the City of London, went bankrupt he joined the colonial service as curator of the British Guiana (Guyana) Museum in Georgetown. He served with some distinction in that post from 1877 to 1882 and was then appointed regional magistrate from 1882 to 1891. He wrote a classic study of the culture of the Amerindians, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, in 1883 and then, following a successful ascent of Mount Roraima in 1884, published the details of the botany of the mountain areas in 1887 (im Thurn 1967 and 1887). He served as Government Agent in British Guiana between 1891 and 1899 and was awarded the CMG (Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George) in 1892. He had an interesting and diverse background and was successful in his South American work.

Im Thurn then returned to London where he became a 1<sup>st</sup> class clerk—the head of a department—at the Colonial Office before being appointed to Ceylon as Lieutenant Governor and Colonial Secretary. He was then cross-posted to Fiji as Governor and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific (Scarr 1967a: 117). General assessments of im Thurn's career have been varied. He was seen by mountaineers as the conqueror of Mount Roraima and as a sensitive and innovative photographer by visual anthropologists. He was a representative of

that community of intellectually versatile and physically resilient British colonial administrators who turned their attention to the interconnections between the disciplines of ethnography, geography, botany, ornithology, administration, and economic and cultural development. As collectors, lecturers, and writers their output was extraordinarily extensive. As residents in often geographically remote British colonies they developed attachments and loyalties to the lands of their posting that often created tensions with their personal and professional ambitions and commitment to the imperial centre (Dalziell 2007: 102)

The same statement could be used to describe Woodford. Im Thurn was also a skilful botanist and sent many rare plants and ethno-botanical objects to the Kew gardens. He was a follower of the evolutionary anthropology of William Halse

Rivers Rivers and, as a follower of the theory that the Fijian people were a dying race, he contributed the preface to *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*. Woodford also contributed an article (Rivers 1922; Woodford 1922b).

Although Scarr (1967a) covered much of im Thurn's administration in some detail in his study of the history of the Western Pacific High Commission, im Thurn's time in the Pacific has not been subject to the level of critical investigation given to the work of John Bates Thurston (Scarr 1973 and 1980). Important too was the role of Merton King, appointed as Secretary to the High Commissioner in 1898. Merton King came with some reluctance to the Pacific although he remained in Fiji until 1907 and then served as Resident Commissioner in the New Hebrides until 1924 (Heath 1974a: 95; Scarr 1967a: 117). As Governor of Fiji, im Thurn succeeded Sir Henry Moore Jackson. During his long tenure in office—1904 to 1911—he created some controversy by altering the land laws implemented by Sir Arthur Gordon (Lord Stanmore). Gordon had codified Fijian land ownership and prevented native Fijians from working outside their village economies and social structure. There was some internal labour migration but it was unofficial and open to bribery (Newbury 210: 105). This in turn formally identified people with defined geographical boundaries and set ordered social groupings in contrast to the more flexible social and economic structures that had existed before. Gordon's three keystones of native policy were the non-alienation of customary land, the creation of a permanent Council of Chiefs to direct native affairs and the payment of a head tax through produce rather than in cash. Gordon's purpose was to restrict sale of land to Europeans and provide an economic basis for the establishment of the colonial government. These were logical choices made at the time, but his essentialist ideals fixed Fijians to their land and social ties and allowed for little flexibility (Sohmer 1984: 153). To historians of the Pacific, Gordon understood very little of the true nature of Fijian laws and customs.

Im Thurn brought to Fiji many of the beliefs and attitudes he saw developed in Guiana and Ceylon. In Ceylon the Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance of 1840 established the policy that all forests, and waste lands—those lands seen as unoccupied or uncultivated—should be declared Crown land. Although the ordinance was repealed in Ceylon in 1897 the basic principles remained in law (Chapelle 1976: 6). He believed that the same regulations should operate in Fiji despite the understanding that land use and land occupation came under such a variety of customary laws which differed from place to place that they defied codification (Chapelle 1976: 481). In order to stimulate the economy im Thurn opened up large tracks of native land for speculation by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR). Fijian land owners were pushed into the banana industry while the capital-intensive sugar industry was reserved for non-indigenous entrepreneurs and planters (*The West Australian* 17 November

1908: 3). The government's opinion was that '[t]here was no disinclination on the side of the natives to part with their lands. On the contrary, the fear was expressed that they might dispose of so much that the remainder would be insufficient for their future requirements' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 22 August 1908: 18). When im Thurn did implement controversial land reforms in Fiji, between 1904 and 1908, they were attacked not only by members of the Fijian Legislative Council but also with some vengeance by Stanmore, then in the House of Lords (Chapelle 1976; Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords. Debates, 16 July 1908: 192: cc998-1002). The introduced ordinances for land sale and leasing were complex. They assumed a blatant racist position that Fijians were incapable of appreciating the advantages or disadvantages of land transactions. The belief was that the 'colonial Government consequently stands in loco parentis' and this condescending attitude excused the declaration of large areas of native lands as waste property.

In Suva, im Thurn decided that Fijians had no prior claim to land and that the state should take it over and privatise it. He based this on the belief that the colonialisng process was irreversible and that strong colonial economies could only develop based on individual enterprise. This served European interests but also served to support im Thurn's opinion that British colonial administration provided the best example in the rule of law and order. He failed to understand the complexities of the customary land traditions and the conflict between it and the growing economic exploitation created by the large-scale plantation system and its demand for imported coolie labour (Dalziell 2007: 105). The imported Indian labourers were subjected to harsh employment conditions, poor housing and remained on the social margins of Fijian life. The inevitable exploitation of Indian plantation labour intensified for '[t]here was always exploitation under the indenture system in the sense that indentured labour was paid less than the going free-market wage' (Knapman 1985: 59). In a paper presented to the Royal Geographical Society the year before he retired im Thurn (1909) spelt out his conservative attitudes to governing the many different colonies in the Western Pacific. He credited his time as High Commissioner with the suppression of the evils of the Pacific labour trade, even though recruiting for the labour trade from the Solomon Islands to Fiji continued until 1911, the year he retired from office (im Thurn 1909: 279). He also failed to acknowledge the impact of changing labour and economic conditions within the Queensland sugar industry, the impact of the White Australia Policy, and the strongly voiced social opinions from among church members in the Australian states. These were internal factors that led to the end of the Queensland labour trade. Recruitment of Indian labour to Fiji stopped in March 1917 by which time the Colonial Sugar Refining Company had secured a monopoly over sugar production in Fiji (Knapman 1985: 61). Im Thurn supported the development of the phosphate mines on Ocean Island that he called 'small, rocky and scrub-covered, and at the time that it came into

European ken had but few inhabitants' (im Thurn 1909: 284). He considered the conversion of this supposedly desolate piece of rock into a busy centre of industry a positive move for the 'few natives have prospered greatly under the employment thus afforded to them'. In this, he failed to see that the long-term result would be the dispossession and economic destitution of the Banaban people. The contradiction was that while arguing against Lord Stanmore over changing Fijian land laws he was supporting Stanmore's commercial activities as a director of Pacific Phosphate Company Ltd, the company profiting from the destruction of Banaba.

## A new social order

In the Solomon Islands head hunting raids from the New Georgia group ceased around 1902 but isolated incidents of retribution and murder, like the Burns and Binskin cases, continued. Punitive campaigns against raiders by white officers and native police targeted the large war canoes. When a sufficient number of these *tomoko* were destroyed, raiding ceased. Not all *tomoko* were destroyed. But while this was a visible act in the cessation of head hunting, it did not cause it. There were many other factors involved. Destruction of canoes disrupted intergroup communication, as well as warfare, and broke the alliance, kinship and affinal linkages that facilitated many social and economic ties. Local leadership was discredited by defeat at the hands of the police and into that power vacuum came the Christian churches. Inter-island connections unravelled and relations between islanders and Europeans became dominated by trade based around copra making (Boutilier 1975: 32; Dureau 1998: 208).

The pacification of the Solomon Islands coincided with the early years of Federation in Australia, the passing of the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901* (Cth) (1 Edward VII 16 1901) designed to bring about the conclusion of the Queensland labour trade by 31 March 1904 and the final deportation of any remaining labourers by 31 December 1906. Paradoxically, the end of the labour trade that would see the end to the illegal smuggling of firearms and ammunition into the islands would also lead to a downturn in revenue. Labour ships no longer travelled to and from Queensland and no longer paid an annual £100 licence fee. The period of establishment leading up to 1901 saw the Protectorate poor and barely able to maintain its way (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1902a: 5). The new government station at Gizo had to be built with another grant-in-aid from the Imperial treasury of £500 (Woodford to O'Brien 14 January 1900 WPHC 4/IV 56/1900). The small white population of 76 people consisted mostly of traders (48) and missionaries (17). Even women and children outnumbered government officials. The government

continued to estimate the local population at 150,000 but as no census was ever undertaken this lack of specificity contributed to the general assumptions about depopulation of Melanesia.

Pacification had a secondary impact on the export trade. Turtle hunting in the Manning Straits between Choiseul and Bougainville Islands was undertaken either before or after head hunting raids by men from the western islands. When head hunting was suppressed, trade in turtle shell declined (McKinnon 1975). Primary exports were still sales of copra, some ivory nuts and *bêche de mer*, but for the first time local people sold 15 cases of curios and there was a marked increase in pearling (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1901). With the Manning Straits now pacified, commercial exploitation of pearls and pearl shell could continue. William Hamilton had secured a lease from the German administration and this was converted to a 99 year pearling lease in 1904 when the area became British territory. This was only two years after the area had been a favourite turtle hunting ground for Roviana head hunters (Bennett 1987: 132–133; Golden 1993: 225–226; AU NBAC N115/488).

Now head hunting no longer interfered with the management and the development of the plantations. Pacification, essential for the viability of the plantation economy, also allowed the missions to Christianise large areas of the western islands. This was completed, at least in the Methodist areas in Roviana, by 1902. This pacification made great changes to social and economic systems, but the administration itself was really of marginal importance to village life in missionised regions. It was the mission, not the administration, that assumed responsibilities for education, health and welfare programs. The missions became the media through which local people sought attention from the government (Dureau 1998: 213). Participation in Christianity became the new key to social mobility. Being Christian and wearing the cross in place of pagan charms was a new way of protecting oneself from attack, sickness and misfortune and a way of staying in harmony with the new spiritual world (White 1983: 135). The religious acts of blessing, anointing and baptising became 'weapons in the spiritual arsenal of indigenous Christians' and the churches became major political as well as social organisations (White 1991: 108).

The early period of the Protectorate, from 1896 to 1902, had been one of constant violence. Islanders quickly learned that the Europeans had stronger lasting power. The settler community saw pacification of the islands as essential for future development but so too did local people who realised that trade goods and services, like Christianity, would flow more evenly during times of peace. The missions and the government set about reordering local communities into nucleated villages along the coasts that had once been indefensible. People on islands like Isabel and Choiseul who had been subjected to head hunting now moved back to the coasts where communities clustered around the missions.

The position of Big-men had been marked by 'magical powers, gardening prowess, mastery of oratory style, perhaps bravery in war and feud' (Sahlins 1963). Their power was cemented in the distribution of goods but when these could be obtained by employment with the missions or on the plantations the status of the Big-man declined. Serious disputes now centred on land tenure. Establishing rights over communal land became partly economic to gain access to a productive resource like copra and then timber, and partly the pursuit of prestige and status validated by control of property (Scheffler 1964).

## Feasting and the acceptance of peace and Christianity

The feast to celebrate the 'giving up' of head hunting witnessed by Graham Officer was not the only ritual performance of celebratory feasting used by local people to signal the start of a new social order. Rev George Brown of the Methodist Mission commenced evangelising work at Port Hunter in the Duke of York Islands, between New Britain and New Ireland, in August 1875. He secured land for his mission from two local Big-men, Waruwarum and To Pulu. During the early years he was especially reliant on the support and protection of these men (Gardner and Philp 2006). By being on their land, the Methodists were incorporated into the local trading bloc that extended across the region and, because they were the providers of new and valuable trade goods, the movements of the missionaries were constrained by the Big-men. The flow of trade, including the spiritual 'trade' of new prayers and hymns and the mission teachers, first moved out to allied villages. The people in these communities then accepted Christianity as part of the customary exchange network.

The complex web of reciprocity, missionisation and the changing dynamic of local power relations can be seen in the circumstances surrounding the great feast given by the Big-men when Brown departed from the Bismarck Archipelago in 1881. That feast, organised for New Year's Eve of December 1880, was viewed by the missionaries as a testament to the people's love of Brown and his work (Reeson 2013: 162). But for the more than 400–500 people who attended the celebration, it was an act of reciprocity. In repayment for the gifts of prayer, ritual and a new spiritual order, Brown was ceremonially feasted on his departure from their land. Beside Waruwarum and To Pulu, the Big-men from the affiliated villages attended. Brown was a keen photographer (Brown 1908 and 1910). Although mission texts record that the local men played a major part in the success of the evangelisation of the islands the images 'reveal that the relationship between the big-men and the mission, while essential to the success of the later, was based more on Duke of York economies and alliances

than on Christian principles' (Gardner and Philp 2006: 180). The former 'pagan' moral order was subsumed by a new Christianised structure but that too was indigenised.

## The Methodist mission to New Georgia

In 1902, Brown, Rev John Goldie, Rev Stephen Rabone Rooney, a party of four Fijian and three Samoan teachers and their wives set out from Sydney for the Solomon Islands (Hilliard 1966: 249). With the encouragement and logistical support of Frank Wickham and Norman Wheatley they headed for Roviana Lagoon (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 10 May 1902: 11, 39). The day they arrived, 23 May 1902, is now acknowledged as the first day of a new era of peace and Christianity. The Methodists first erected a mission house at Nusa Zonga on land purchased from the traders but then bought a larger property on the mainland of New Georgia at Kokeqolo, Munda Point (Woodford to O'Brien 29 July 1902 WPHC 4/IV 150/1902). The orthodox evangelist's view was that the native was a heathen, a pagan ripe for conversion. The past too was dark and savage, and only the present—with acceptance of Christianity—and the future were times of hope, brightness and light. In the Solomon Islands Christianity became infused with the concepts of *mana* and the supernatural, particularly as pacification arrived in the western islands at the same time as the church. With the end of head hunting and the arrival of the Methodists, the power of the *baqara* faded. Hocart (1922: 79–80) reported that people complained 'the chiefs are dullards (*tuturu*) and like commoners (*tinoni homboro*) ... No one is mighty now; they are all alike; they have no money, they cannot go headhunting, they all "stop nothing"'. The vacuum created in the power structure was replaced by the church. Just as political influence and respect were accorded those who possessed *mana*, so too was status and respect accorded to the Christian ministers and pastors (Burman 1981: 264–295). Inequalities of wealth and position were explained, and justified, by a lack of grace rather than lack of *mana*. Like the efficacy of *mana*, being in a state of grace was now defined by success in religious and secular activities. The savage was not accorded masculine or feminine characteristics but those of infancy. Christian literature was full of the trope of childhood. The native was to be taught faith and the notion of sin, given training and guidance, and brought into a new way of living. Missionary texts defined native peoples as children being led to salvation. God was the father, Jesus his son, missionaries were brothers and sisters, heathens were childlike, and converts, like domestic servants, were mission 'boys' and 'girls' who benefited from discipline and propriety (Thomas 1990: 150). The missions were structured on this familial order and hierarchy.

The Methodists were particularly successful in the western islands for they established industrial missions where men and women were taught skills as well as religion and so 'the mission was not simply a religious instrument but rather a total social fact' (Thomas 1992: 384). The mission controlled work, leisure, celebration and worship and became a new community with chiefly structures established through the church elders, both senior men and women, and the new 'macrofamilial institution' fitted into the Christianised social and moral order. The mission became a major local, social, economic and political entity but the response to this was not complete acceptance. Conflict between denominations and conflict between the churches, traders and the administration weakened the apparent hegemonic power of the colonisers in the eyes of the people. This plurality of forces left room for a dynamic indigenous response of accommodation and resistance (Thomas 1992: 388). Acceptance of the mission presence and the spread of Christianity was impossible without the support of local people. The people played a significant role in the process of conversion for the '[i]ndigenous interaction with and agency for new European-initiated religious missionary movements was a complex process' largely unseen and unknown to the white missionaries and administrators (Butlin 2009: 383). From the mission perspective, the permanent presence of the police and government officials at Gizo, the growing plantation economy, the economic power of traders and new polity established by the presence of administration headquarters at Tulagi, provided the Methodists with an environment in which they could establish their head station at Munda. The linkage between acceptance of Christianity and celebratory feasting was again apparent when Stephen Rooney and his wife attempted to establish a new mission on Choiseul. The village of Sasamungga (Sasamuqa) on the Mbambatana coast was chosen but a great Christmas feast in 1906 disposed many local people who had not accepted Christianity to turn in favour of the mission (Hilliard 1966: 258).

## The great feast of honour

Mahaffy left Gizo on leave in February 1903. Before he went he held a great feast in honour of the coronation of King Edward VII (O'Brien 2011: 202–207). A date in November 1902, just after his article was published in *The Empire Review*, was chosen because it was the time of the best clear and calm weather before the wet, stormy end of the year. Mahaffy invited all the important *ba□ara* and their followers from across the New Georgia region. These were the same men he had been fighting over the past two years in the suppression of head hunting. The feast to celebrate the end of head hunting witnessed by Graham Officer was held in Roviana on 27 July 1901 (Officer 1901– MS 9321; see Richards 2012). As reciprocal feasting and ceremonies were an integral part of the pre-Christian

polity, the feast given by Mahaffy became another part of this ritual cycle (*The Mercury* [Hobart] 2 October 1901: 6; Zelenietz 1983: 101). A man's wealth and power was measured by the lavishness of the feasts he could sponsor and for his great feast Mahaffy planned for 1,000 guests (Burman 1981: 265). He had his police construct sleeping houses, feasting areas and a dancing ground (*pavasa*) and using the canoes confiscated during raids he sought food to feed this vast number of guests. The feast and the dancing were scheduled to last three days. In all 1,892 people attended and Mahaffy wrote that it was a 'picturesque sight to see the great canoes all decorated with streamers and each with its full complement of men, coming up the [Gizo] harbour at full speed' (O'Brien 2011: 204). It was obvious that Mahaffy and the police had not succeeded in destroying or confiscating all the great *tomoko*. Many had been well hidden during the police raids on villages. Now that peace had come to the islands, and the mission had been established on Hiqava's land at Munda, it was possible to display the canoes for they were no longer under threat of destruction.

Hiqava and the other chiefs had incorporated both the *Lotu* and the government into their own spheres of influence. Some idea of the importance of feasting as a sign of cementing new political relationships was becoming apparent to the administration. Woodford wrote to Sir George O'Brien following Mahaffy's raid on Mbilua and stated: 'Between the natives of Rubiana, Simbo and Narovo [central Simbo] and the Government the friendliest relations now subsist. Invitations to attend native feasts are now always sent to the Government Station at Gizo and pigs instead of human beings are sacrificed upon the inauguration of new canoes' (Woodford to O'Brien 15 September 1902 WPHC 4/IV 41/1902). Even Woodford was forced to admit that 'the punishment inflicted [upon suspected head hunters], which in reality only amounts to the loss of their head-hunting canoes, will appear a moderate one'.

But O'Brien (2011: 205) is correct in her general assessment of Mahaffy's great feast. Mahaffy did not fully understand the social, political and economic complexities of this very entangled part of the Solomon Islands. Financing ceremonial feasts was part of chiefly strategy to gain status, prestige and to consolidate power among followers and allies. Of all the local *ba□ara* it was Hiqava who had emerged as powerful and influential. He was not the greatest chief in the region by any means but he was a great manipulator. Like the Big-men of the Duke of York Islands, he had contained the head station of the Methodist mission to his lands and now he was reaping the material, spiritual and social benefits of their presence there. At the great feast, Mahaffy gave management of the distribution of food to Hiqava. This in the eyes of the people attending would show that Hiqava was in charge of the feast and that he, not the government, was bringing the new moral order to the region. Mahaffy was but a temporary figure in the area. He left in early 1903 and did not return from

this extended leave until May 1904. In September 1904 he was offered, and accepted, a senior post in the office of the High Commission in Suva (O'Brien 2011: 199, 202, 208).

## South Seas Evangelical Mission

The foundation of one of the most influential and longest serving evangelical churches in the Solomon Islands, the South Seas Evangelical Mission (SSEM)—later the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC)—was laid at this time. The Queensland Kanaka Mission (QKM), the forerunner of the South Seas Evangelical Mission, was unusual. It was formed by a woman and started at the very heart of the plantation labour area. Established by lay-missionary Florence Young at Fairymead Plantation outside Bundaberg in 1886, the mission began after she had commenced preaching to planters' families in the region. Florence Young was described as 'a wealthy spinster and member of a prominent Plymouth Brethren family ... a woman of determination and drive. Stout and bespectacled, with a buoyant Evangelical faith and overwhelming assurance of the will of God, she was a striking example of that army of emancipated Victorian women who found an outlet for the crusading instincts in religious causes, preferably those in which they themselves could occupy a commanding position' (Boutilier 1974: 45 quoting from Hilliard 1969: 42).

Fairymead, owned by her brothers, Arthur, Horace and Ernest, was a profitable sugar plantation and mill and their background and business acumen were also significant in the development of the mission. They owned two labour recruiting vessels, the *May* and the *Lochiel*. The Youngs began to recruit from the Gilbert Islands where conditions were safer for white men and the recruiting process conducted through the *unimame*, the Council of Elders (Munro 1992: 453–454). The *Lochiel*, like a number of labour vessels, was an old cargo boat converted to labour-carriage with the addition of two or three tiers of bunks in the hold. It had been the first labour schooner of William Hamilton who developed the pearling industry in the Solomon Islands. Its suitability for the labour trade was called into question by Woodford who complained that it was not fit to carry produce let alone human beings (Johnston 1980: 51 quoting Woodford to the Governor of Queensland 28 March 1904 QSA PRE/84). The Gilbertese did not remain long in the plantation economy. Most were repatriated by 1898 for they fought with the Melanesian labourers and by 1900, when phosphate was discovered on Ocean Island, Gilbertese became mine workers rather than agricultural labourers (Munro 1992: 459, 462).

When transported to Queensland, the vast majority of Pacific Island labourers were illiterate, could not understand spoken English and many had no idea of

formalised Christianity. Any Christian teaching would have to start with these fundamental problems and build from there. The mainland churches, both Protestant and Catholic, were preoccupied with establishing themselves among the European population in the rapidly growing towns of north Queensland. Anglican missions to the Islander population encountered resistance and prejudice from settlers in northern Australia (Moore 2008a: 302). The Pacific mission churches, the London Missionary Society and the Melanesian Mission, declined to send pastors to Queensland to preach to the labourers. They remained island based and preferred to follow the pattern of using senior white missionaries and South Sea Islander pastors and teachers (Hilliard 1969: 41). The Melanesian Mission did not foster connections with Queensland Anglican dioceses until 1895.

The aim of the Queensland Kanaka Mission was to have the men reject 'heathen' customs and the habits of alcohol abuse, swearing, fighting and gambling that many had acquired. There was a sizable population of Melanesians in the Bundaberg region. One quarter of the 10,000 indentured labourers in Queensland were located there at that time (Hilliard 1969: 42). Of the more than 17,000 labourers brought to Queensland from the Solomon Islands more than 9,000 were from Malaita (Price and Baker 1976: 110–111, 115–116). This led to important implications for the mission that became predominantly Malaitan in its membership and its value system. When time came to establish an island-based mission the place chosen to settle was Onepusu on the south-western coast of Malaita. As an evangelical, non-denominational mission, the QKM preached 'salvation before education and civilization' (Moore 2013a: 3). The guiding conviction was that the Christian Gospel must be brought to those without it. No educational, medical or social work was to impede the message of salvation first and the primary aim was to prepare Melanesian men for their eventual repatriation back to the islands where they would spread the message of salvation. However, many labourers had a keen desire to learn to read and write and a high standard of moral conduct and verbal testimony was required before conversion. Drinking, swearing and gambling were expressly proscribed. This prohibition on alcohol and gambling, and the need to learn to read and write, were all part of the attraction of the QKM. Drinking and gambling had become major health and livelihood issues among the labourers and the deferred pay system was imposed as one way to exercise control over alcohol abuse. Alcohol, drugs and gambling were, in fact, important devices for social control. Drinking parties were incorporated into worker leisure activity and the giving and receiving of alcohol and money became part of a transplanted exchange system (Graves 1983: 118). The QKM activities were a way in which men could take control of their own lives and become more accepted within the European community. By breaking with these worker leisure activities and by forswearing alcohol and gambling, the men made the mission their social centre.

Following on from the China Inland Mission model, the QKM maintained a solid uncompromising stance based on a literal interpretation of the New Testament (Moore 2013a: 4). This fundamentalist approach to Biblical teaching then became the primary religious philosophy taken back to the Solomon Islands. Conflicting values surfaced in the islands where the pidgin-English fundamentalism taught by early QKM pastors had little affinity with the Melanesian Mission's formal liturgical Christianity (Hilliard 1966: 131). When the Queensland government proposed to end the labour trade in 1890 Florence Young went to work with the China Inland Mission, the body with which she most closely identified. The government reversed this decision in 1892 and the labour trade was extended for a further ten years. The QKM then re-engaged with the imported workers. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 Florence Young was forced to leave China and return to Queensland and so from that time she devoted her energies to the QKM that remained based in Queensland until 1906. It was renamed the South Sea Evangelical Mission (SSEM) and became fully island-based from 1907. After 1964 it was renamed the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC) (Moore 2009a).

The evangelical groundwork in the Solomon Islands was largely built on the efforts of returned workers rather than white missionaries. One man instrumental in establishing the mission on Malaita was Peter Abu'ofa who, after a faltering start at Lau Lagoon, eventually built a church and school at Malu'u in north Malaita (Moore 2013a: 5). Although this was his home area the establishment of the mission there was precarious for he faced hostility from local people and even from within his own family (Moore 2013a: 14; Moore 2009a). A man of some resolution Abu'ofa even accused Joseph Vos, the captain and part-owner of the labour vessel *William Manson*, of kidnapping in 1894. Vos had been accused of illegal recruiting practices before. As captain of the labour schooner the *Lizzie* in 1883 his recruiter Peter Dowell had taken a woman from Ambrym against the wishes of her people and then kidnapped a man who had come to take her back (Scarr 1967b: 19–20; *The Vagabond* [Julian Thomas] 1886; Johnston 1980). But this latest episode resulted from a complaint of kidnapping being made by Abu'ofa and other islanders who had been returned to Queensland rather than let off at their homes in north Malaita. Subsequently Vos, the Government Agent, the mate, the recruiter and three seamen of the 'William Manson' were arrested in Brisbane and charged under the *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1880* (44 Vict c.17) and the amendment acts of 1884, 1885 and 1886. Two long and highly publicised trials ensued, first in the City Police Court between November and December 1894, and then in the Supreme Court of Queensland in March 1895. The *William Manson* crew were found not guilty. Despite these findings, no doubt influenced by the judge's biased statement that 'a great number of the witnesses were South Sea Islanders, coloured men—uneducated men—men unacquainted with religion and other sanctions which bind white men to the truth', the Queensland Government barred all the accused from participation

in the labour trade (Moore 2013a: 6–10; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 16 August 1894: 6; *The Queenslander* 30 March 1895: 614–615). The case was reported widely in Australian newspapers (*South Australian Chronicle* 24 November 1894: 10; *South Australian Register* 7 December 1894: 6; *The Brisbane Courier* 20 November 1894: 2). To that extent, the only legal case brought by a Pacific Islander to challenge the Queensland labour trade was a small victory for the prosecution.

By 1905 the QKM claimed over 2,000 converts in Queensland. Like Abu'ofa the repatriated teachers who returned to the islands, many to Malaita, faced a difficult time. When they could they formed small enclaves on the coast where they could continue to build churches and schools. Still they faced threats from other groups, especially the neighbouring bush communities. When the labour trade was abolished by an act of the Australian Federal Parliament in 1901, the QKM ceased to be necessary as a separate evangelising mission in Queensland (Hilliard 1969: 48). It had served its purpose. Now a need was obvious to establish the mission in the islands and to support the lay pastors there. Florence Young began visiting the Solomon Islands each year after 1904 and continued to do so until 1926. Her nephews, Northcote Deck and Norman Deck, subsequently took up duties in the Solomon Islands as resident missionaries. The SSEM retained an executive council of nine members resident in Sydney and Melbourne, and a headquarters based at Eldon Chambers, 92 Pitt Street Sydney, for the mission remained entirely dependent on unsolicited donations from supporters, mostly in Australia and New Zealand.

In a decidedly uncritical history of the SSEM written in 1951 by the then District Officer at Auki, possibly A. A. MacKeith (BSIP 1/III F23/9), the expansion into the plantation economy also had Christian meaning. Florence Young 'decided to look around for a company of "sympathetic Christian gentlemen" who might wish to render the mission a great service and at the same time find a safe investment in the Solomons'. These 'sympathetic Christian gentlemen' were her brothers from the Fairymead Plantation who formed the Malayta Company in 1908 with a strong capital base of £30,000. They established Baunani copra plantation along a 15 mile strip of coast (24 kilometres) that covered 10,000 acres (4,000 hectares) (Moore 2009a: 28). The plantation was located just 20 miles (32 kilometres) north of the mission headquarters at Onepusu, The land, previously owned by W. H. Pope, cost the Young family and their investors £35,000 (Boutilier 1983: 50). It was the largest and earliest alienation of plantation land on Malaita but, like other alienations of land in the islands, it was made without accurate survey. Here members of the mission could find work and attend evening education and scripture classes. The establishment of the plantation came after the formation

of the SSEM but the commercial incentive to develop the plantation, with its large resident Christian workforce, mirrors the foundation of the mission at Fairymead Plantation in Bundaberg.

One of the most successful moves made by the SSEM was to hold services in Pijin or local language. The administration later had requested that the mission re-evaluate this language policy and use English as the medium of instruction. Many islanders later understood that the real key to power was good education, and not just literacy, and so the use of local languages in the church declined. Another successful move was to begin a nucleus of mission stations and schools around the coasts of Malaita, Guadalcanal and Makira. The size of Malaita, and the reputation of the people there, had limited the success of the Melanesian Mission and the other churches. By basing the mission on Malaita the impact of the SSEM on the established spheres of influence of the mainstream churches was limited. However Peter Abu'ofa's contribution to the pacification and formation of Christian communities in north Malaita was outstanding (Moore 2013a: 18). From 1895 Abu'ofa began building cooperation between inland villages and the new Christian coastal communities and he 'can be said to have established the foundations of modern society in north Malaita'. This cooperation began well before the British administration constructed a post at Auki in 1909.

Regrettably, the presence of the SSEM in Guadalcanal and Makira was different. There, it did raise concerns within the mainstream churches. The mission was referred to by one Anglican missionary as 'dissent in its barest and crudest form' (Hilliard 1969: 49 quoting from the Annual Report of the Melanesian Mission for 1908: 35). The SSEM made a strict distinction between the mission, whose aims were to instruct and preach, and the church, the national organisation of members who had been evangelised. The SSEM chose to remain ideologically removed from the administration. This was due to fundamental differences in philosophy and social position. Norman Deck, interviewed by Boutilier (1974: 59), reported that he had told the Resident Commissioner Jack Barley: 'God has sent us here primarily with a gospel to win these people to the Christian faith. We give them education because they don't know how to read until we teach them to read. And central was the scriptures. Our whole work is built upon the knowledge of the scriptures'. The aim of education Young had also stated was 'above all they [local people] learn to depend on GOD' (BSIP 1/III F23/9). The commitment to scripture based faith, the operations of the Malayta Company and the financial role of the Young brothers were to cause discontent between the mission and the administration (Hilliard 1969: 52). It was clear that Woodford had some dislike of the methods and philosophies of both the SSEM and the Methodists. They formed powerful factions. Both the Youngs and the Decks on Malaita and Goldie and his senior pastors at Roviana had direct and powerful contacts in the Colonial Office and the Western Pacific High

Commission. They were also prepared to use their connections and resources. But the main success of the SSEM was its ability to inculcate in the minds of local people, especially in Malaita, a belief in their own capabilities and to encourage a degree of autonomy at the local level which other missions found impossible to achieve. This congregational nature of local church government, administered by pastor-teachers and local elders, was readily adaptable to the local authority structures (Hilliard 1969: 60). Teaching was simple, based on a strict fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. This scriptural authority was a convenient and final determination for many with both secular and religious authority.

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