

9. The plantation economy

The State Library of Victoria holds a small but interesting archive of papers from W. Stawell—possibly William Stawell a prominent lawyer in Melbourne and senior partner in the firm Stawell and Nankivell (Stawell 1910, MS 9273). These papers provide some idea of the investment potential of plantations in the Solomon Islands in the first decade of the 20th century. Stawell made enquires of a stockbroker, John Goodall, with offices at 99 Queens Street in Melbourne. Stawell approached the firm with an enquiry about investing in plantation development in the Solomon Islands in 1910 when copra prices were high. From the correspondence, it is possible to deduce the costs of establishing a small-scale copra plantation in the islands and the profits to be expected. The firm wrote to Stawell that the population estimates on Guadalcanal and Malaita were between 100,000 and 150,000 each—misreading the figures in the annual reports of the Protectorate. They estimated that one Solomon Islander worker could look after 7–8 acres a year and that the cost of felling timbers and planting coconut palms was about £19 per acre. In 1910, with the copra price at £27/10/- a ton and production estimates at £15 a ton, the predicted profit was £12 a ton. No indication of the volatility of copra prices was given. The firm told Stawell that profit on an initial capital input of £7,754 was £3,360 or almost 45% on the investment after seven years. The company writing to Stawell provided a complete breakdown of costs on an annual basis and the need for an initial £7,000 capital investment figure was drawn from those estimates. Other costs included a salary of £300 a year for the white manager, with the basic contract wages of £6 a year per worker, an estimate of 10/- a month per person for food and a recruiting fee of £7 per person.

The plantation land under investigation by Stawell was located on the western side of Kolomgangara and south of the Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd concession. The land between Wilson Cove (Hambere) and Ariel Cove (Meresu near Kukundu) that fronted Porpoise Bay (Vella Gulf) was about 4 square miles or 2,560 acres in area. This property was later purchased by Norman Wheatley in order to keep it out of the hands of investors. The chiefs proposed that Wheatley buy the land with a stipulation that local people could collect coconuts there (Burnett 1911: 136–137; Bennett 1987: 120). The land under consideration was presented to Stawell as flat and dry land that could be converted to plantation. In fact it was occupied, heavily forested, with steep hills intersected by many creeks and streams and had a high annual rainfall. The large Lever's concession covered almost two-thirds of the island and there were few planters located on the west side (Stawell 1910, MS 9273). The only other property owner on the south-west was shown to be Mr A. Fischer. Burnett (1911: 135) travelling on the *Makambo* with Arthur Mahaffy noted that one potential investor in land on Kolombangara

was a close relative of Mahaffy and the other 'an alleged German-American tobacco planter'. Clearly, there were other investors besides the large companies interested in the plantation economy. The costs provided to Stawell gave no indication of the physical difficulties associated in developing a plantation in such an isolated location and the problems that would be encountered in dealing with local landowners and immigrant labour. There are no indications that Stawell ever invested in plantation land on Kolombangara. This can be compared with a proposal undertaken in 1905 by L. F. Giblin for Lord Stanmore. Giblin proposed that it would require an investment of £39,900 over seven years to provide a 10% profit of £3,910. In that time 3,960 acres of land would be planted with coconuts (WPHC 4/IV 70/1906). In comparison the proposal submitted to Stanwell by his Melbourne stockbroker was clearly unviable.

With the plantation economy developing, albeit at a slower pace than expected, the range of imports at this time expanded. The most highly sought after produce remained tobacco, still used in part as a currency, along with rice, calico, axes, knives, tinned meat, flour and kerosene. Beer and spirits were imported from Australia but the *Liquor Regulation of 1893* (Queen's Regulation no 4 of 1893) prohibited their sale to islanders. Construction materials such as timber and corrugated iron were imported along with numerous whaleboats. These whaleboats became an important commodity in communities and Woodford specifically noted in the annual report that 'natives continue to buy boats, and several arrive from Sydney by every steamer' (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1902: 6). Coastal people needed boats and with peace came a more permanent settlement of the littoral. The demand for the more acceptable whaleboats became a sign of the times, but in order to pay for the boats people needed to participate in the developing plantation economy. Tobacco remained part currency and part wage payment for some time. The annual expenditure report to the High Commission for the year 1913–1914 would record that the £12,000 allocated for the purchase of tobacco by the administration was overspent by more than £1,000 (BSIP 3/1/1).

Before the labour trade had finished, and before all indentured labourers were deported from Queensland, the last of the labour migrants were utilising the time to bring in arms hidden in sails, down the galley funnel, in water tanks and even fastened to fishing lines and dropped over the side. An inspection of all returning labour boats was undertaken at the departure port in Queensland and again in Tulagi harbour but many weapons escaped detection. The smuggling of firearms at the end of the labour trade was a problem for all. It was even reported to the *Brisbane Courier* (4 September 1908: 2) by Florence Young who stated that guns and ammunition were being bought in Papua and shipped on Burns Philp steamers to the Solomons via German New Guinea. This practice continued for some time for it was later confirmed by Thomas Edge-Partington,

the District Magistrate at Auki, in his report to Woodford on 5 April 1911 (BSIP 14/40). Earlier Woodford had told the *Sydney Morning Herald* (30 June 1908: 7) that not only illegal importing of guns was a problem but that he estimated that on Malaita alone there could be as many as 4,000 to 5,000 Winchester repeating rifles. It was believed that 'should the recruiting of labourers for the Queensland plantations be stopped altogether by the Federal Australian Government as is probable, the effect would be to render available a larger supply of labourers for local requirements' but it was hoped it would also stop the importation of guns and ammunition from Australia, Papua or German New Guinea. The illegal supply of arms continued until after 1914 when indentured labourers in Fiji were returned to the islands. Arms and ammunition were also traded between Marau on Guadalcanal and Malaita during the regular movement of people across Indispensable Strait (BSIP 14/42).

The waste land regulations

The need to make the protectorate self-supporting led to a preoccupation with the establishment of a plantation economy in which the long-term interests of the islanders were relegated to the background (WPHC 8/III Items 31–40: Memos and Land Policy in the BSIP 1893–1914; Scarr 1967a: 291). Prior to the establishment of the Protectorate land could be secured by direct negotiation between landowners and white men but the system was flawed. Woodford wrote in his annual report: 'No attempt was made [by the purchasers] to enquire into the title of the native who was supposed to sell the land. The first native encountered on the beach was considered good enough to purchase from' (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1902: 13–14). Following formal declaration of the Protectorate the *Solomons (Land) Regulation of 1896* (Queen's Regulation no 4 of 1896) specified that every trading station and agricultural area secured by purchase or lease from traditional owners was only granted provisionally until ownership was approved by the High Commissioner in Fiji. Under the regulation, one-tenth of the land had to be planted with cultivated crops within five years or it would revert to its original owners. The regulation was implemented to restrict further freehold sale of land.

Subsequently a waste land regulation was implemented. Officially, protectorates lay outside the territorial dominion of the Crown. Protectorate status gave the administration rights to call any land Crown land provided it was first described as 'waste and unoccupied'. Under English law, the colonial government could not acquire radical title over this unoccupied or waste land and therefore was unable to grant proprietary rights to that land. It could only offer rights of occupation. Woodford believed that Solomon Islanders attached little value to land but viewed property rights under custom being conferred to the things

planted on the land, and the fruits of the trees (Heath 1979: 120). He wrote: 'After the crops are taken off the land is allowed to relapse again to forest. When, however, a native plants coco-nuts his property appears to be in the trees themselves, apart altogether from any ownership in the land upon which they are planted' (Woodford 1890b: 33). He believed all people had open access to virgin forest and areas of secondary growth that could be used for gardens. This was a misreading of the diffuse and still uncertain rights to land recognised by custom. Some of this was also due to the repeated acts of some islanders misrepresenting themselves as landowners and selling the land. These sales were often conducted without consultation with other landowners for, under customary laws, any alienation of land must be negotiated with all claimants (Heath 1979: 76). Woodford believed that he could reverse any anomalies in land transactions when found later. This was unrealistic.

Confusing land tenure systems also operated in the islands: Malaita and Choiseul peoples followed patrilineal descent, Guadalcanal, Isabel and Makira peoples followed matrilineal descent lines. In the New Georgia region, as a result of the movement of migrations to the coast and intermarriage, people followed ambilineal descent lines. These descent constructs were 'diverse, flexible and contingently arranged' (Heath 1979: 46). If Woodford and his land officers realised that the ancient law of usufruct—the rights to enjoy the produce of the land—was closer to the nature of Melanesian land occupation than perhaps many mistakes could have been avoided. Usufruct in European civil law is a subordinate legal right to ownership. In Melanesian societies land is communally owned by the clan or tribe. The fact that much land appears unoccupied does not mean it is not owned nor does it mean the land is unmanaged. All land may be occupied but the use of certain plots is conditional upon negotiation and communal agreement. Melanesian custom does not permit permanent land alienation nor does it permit absentee land ownership.

The Solomon (Waste Land) Regulation of 1900 (Queen's Regulation no 3 of 1900) was later amended and consolidated in 1901 (King's Regulation. 1 of 1901) and again in 1904 (King's Regulation no 1 of 1904). This policy was an attempt to meet the conflicting and confusing requirements of cultural interaction and the diverse interpretations of the meaning of land ownership (Heath 1979: viii). The difficulty was not just a lack of understanding of the differences between European and Melanesian concepts of land ownership. The misunderstanding was accentuated by the complex authority structure in orthodox British colonialism with divided administrative responsibilities between the local British Solomon Islands administration in Tulagi, the Western Pacific High Commission in Suva, and the Colonial Office in London (Heath 1979: xi). It allowed the administration to issue Certificates of Occupation for any land declared 'not owned, cultivated, or occupied by any native or non-native

person'. The term 'Certificate of Occupation' was introduced in a file note during internal discussions at the Colonial Office. It was considered an alternative to the term 'License to Occupy' that implied more definite ownership of land. In his letter to the Colonial Office, Sir George O'Brien in Suva stated that the lease of land 'consists of an endorsement of the application thereof, [and] covers the grant of fishing rights where the land borders the sea' (O'Brien to Colonial Office 15 January 1900 CO 225 59 5940). O'Brien's failure to clarify the legal position whether this meant exclusive rights to fish would cause considerable bureaucratic consternation later on.

Under this regulation it was hoped that large areas of supposedly unoccupied land could be made available for cultivation. The official position in London was:

Having been informed by the Foreign Office that the natives of certain regions were 'practically savages without any proper conceptions of ownership of land', the Law Officers replied that the right of dealing with all waste and unoccupied land accrued to the Crown by virtue of its protectorate, since protectorates over territories occupied by savage tribes really involve the assumption of control over the lands unappropriated. Her Majesty might, if she is pleased, declare them to be Crown lands, or make grants of them to individuals in fee, or for any term (Heath 1979: 104 quoting Foreign Office to Law Officers 18 November 1899 and Law Office to Foreign Office 13 December 1899 FO 834/19).

The waste land regulation was enacted to encourage large-scale plantation development. The licence for coconut planting was 50 years but could be renewed and a Register of Claims was kept in Suva with a copy of the register in Tulagi. The transaction would incur an administrative fee payable by the claimant but '[i]t is hoped that no time will be lost in putting the whole question of outstanding land claims upon a more satisfactory footing, and of disposing, once and for all, of certain preposterous claims which have been lately advancing', for any plantation economy was then mostly at a standstill (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1902: 14). However the Crown policy of issuing only Certificates of Occupation, not leases, created a problem with finance for potential planters. The certificates only secured the rights of the holder to use of the lands to the exclusion of any other party. They were not accepted as collateral to secure development funding from banks. Only well capitalised, large-scale plantation developments could survive in this financial climate.

While tidying up the register of claims was fundamental to the management of land transactions, the administration did not see, or chose not to see, that the entire premise that the land was unoccupied, and therefore 'waste', was flawed.

The perceived absence of people did not mean that the land was not owned by a community. People shift their gardens continuously, and their villages and hamlets occasionally, but their sacred groves and their food trees are fixed (Miller 1980: 457). While Woodford has been strongly criticised for implementing this policy in the Solomon Islands, the concept of waste lands in colonial states was well entrenched in colonial law (Bennett 1987: 130). In the final analysis Jackson (1978: 240) wrote: 'His [Woodford's] passionate commitment to the commercial development of the island placed him at one with many of the demands of the planting community, but this support was modified by his frustration and disappointment at what he considered to be the slow pace of progress'. The Solomon Islands was not the only tropical protectorate struggling with uninspiring economic development.

After Hugh Hastings Romilly had raised the British flag at Port Moresby on 6 November 1884, Sir Peter Scratchley purchased land from Motuan leaders in 1885. After this initial purchase the economic development of British New Guinea faltered. When the Protectorate became a Crown Colony, and Sir William MacGregor became Administrator, *Land Regulation Ordinance 2 of 1888* was enacted to regulate the acquisition of Crown lands by the administration and to restrict further purchases of land made between local people and traders (British New Guinea 1888). Under this ordinance only the Administrator could acquire land from 'natives'. This would be held as Crown land. The annual report stated: 'Waste and vacant lands not used nor likely to be required by the natives may be taken possession of by the Crown as Crown land. In such acquisitions an attesting instrument is to be prepared, with a full description of the land, and to be recorded in the office of the Registrar-General' (Mair 1970: 135, British New Guinea 1892: v–vi). Subsequently MacGregor passed *Land Ordinance no 7 of 1890* to regulate the settlement of land claims that had occurred between the declaration of protectorate status on 6 November 1884 and the declaration of sovereignty made on 4 September 1888. Land for coconut planting was made available to be leased for a minimum of 60 years with an increasing rent as the plantation became established. The moves by MacGregor to register alienated land, to clean up irregular land purchases and to allocate land for plantation development were largely copied by Woodford in the Solomon Islands. In both cases, the justification for introducing such a policy was to hasten the economic development of the region. Out of a total of 442,965 acres alienated as Crown land in Papua by 1890, 326,400 acres had been acquired under the waste and vacant land legislation (Mair 1970: 136).

By the end of MacGregor's term in office in 1898 no coconut planting of any importance had been started in British New Guinea. MacGregor enacted *Native Board Regulation 2 of 1894* (known as the Planting Coconuts Regulation). This specified that all villagers must plant a certain number of coconut trees with

the number being set by Resident Magistrates taking into account the nature of the land and the agricultural possibilities of growing coconuts in the area. The aim of this regulation was to assist the development of a copra industry based around native grown produce. Following the 1906 Royal Commission into the conditions of government in the colony, Hubert Murray, the Chief Judicial Officer, emerged unscathed from the political debacle (Australia. Parliament 1907; National Archives of Australia 1904–1907; Gibbney 1966; Lattas 1996; Lett 1949). He was installed as Acting Administrator until the new Papua Act was passed by the Australian Parliament in 1905 and, when it came into force on 1 September 1906, British New Guinea became Papua with Murray as Lieutenant Governor.

The Papua Act forbade the sale of freehold land and all leaseholds were then to be assessed on their unimproved value. Under *Land Ordinance no 5 of 1906*, Crown lands could only be disposed of as leases and a maximum term was 99 years with a right of renewal. All leases became subject to improvement conditions in order to prevent speculation or large land acquisitions (Papua 1906/07–1940/41). By 1910, Murray had secured more than one million acres of land as Crown lands under these waste lands provisions. But even with this large amount of Crown land at its disposal, the administration in Papua had trouble attracting investment (Mair 1970: 136–137). Commercial ineptness and government intervention maintained an undue administrative control over commercial development in Papua. Consequently the economy suffered (Ohff 2008). Copra was the main driver of the economy. This was the only tropical product that could not be grown in Australia. In Papua, other produce, pearl shell, turtle shell, trochus, bêche de mer and even gold mining boomed and then went bust. As in the Solomons where many similar regulations were implemented, perceptions of the fabled riches of the tropics faded.

Pacific Islands Company Ltd

The problems faced by the Pacific Islands Company in establishing viable coconut plantations illustrates the complexity of land negotiations in the Solomon Islands. John Thomas Arundel, a Sydney merchant, built up a diversified trading company that operated guano mines, coconut plantations and copra trading and shipping in the Pacific. The main Australian guano projects were small-scale and located on remote places like Raine Island and Lady Elliott Island on the Great Barrier Reef off Queensland. Coconut plantations were started in the Gilbert Islands. Arundel's company merged with a London based trading company to form the Pacific Islands Company in May 1897 with Lord Stanmore—formerly Sir Arthur Gordon, Governor of Fiji and the first High Commissioner for the Western Pacific—as its chairman (PMB 1205 MP1174/1/210 Pacific Islands

Company Memorandum and Articles of Association). Some of the powerful London-based directors had been in the Colonial Office and others had been prosperous merchants and traders (Pacific Islands Company Prospectus enclosed in CO 225 54 13747; PMB 1205 MP1 174/1/248). Two directors had Colonial Office experience: Sir Robert Herbert had been permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonial Office and Sir John Bramston an Assistant Under Secretary of the Colonial Office. The power and influence of these men no doubt assisted them in securing an indenture between the Crown and the company for a license to occupy Ocean Island (Banaba) to mine its guano deposits (WPHC 10/IX Item 238).

Their proposal in the Solomon Islands was to develop large-scale plantations using the chartered company model of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) formed by Cecil Rhodes (Stanmore to Secretary of State for the Colonies 17 April 1898 BSIP 18/III Item 1). In fact Stanmore quoted substantially from the BSAC prospectus in his request to the Colonial Office, remarking that the model used in South Africa had clear implications for the Pacific Islands Company proposals in the Solomon Islands. The Pacific Islands Company actually sought a concession to secure all the 'unoccupied lands' in the islands but the chartered company structure was not favoured by the Colonial Office. This approach failed to come to fruition in part due to imprecise understanding of the rights of the Crown to alienate lands in a protectorate (Arundel to Woodford 25 February 1898 enclosed with O'Brien to Colonial Office 4 July 1898 CO 225 55 17972). Arundel also wrote directly to Woodford on this matter but Woodford stated in a reply that there was little possibility that the Pacific Islands Company request would be granted although Woodford did recommend a survey of Kolombangara and the New Georgia region (Arundel to Woodford 25 February 1898 and Woodford to Arundel 11 April 1898 BSIP 18/III Item 1). The company wanted to purchase its freehold land from the Crown, not from Solomon Islanders, for they were only interested in land that was not subject to traditional customary rights (Colonial Office to Stanmore 16 September 1899 BSIP 18/III Item 1). Stanmore pressed the Colonial Office for access to 200,000 acres of land and complained the 99-year lease was too short. Subsequently the request for 200,000 acres was granted by the Colonial Office although O'Brien, the High Commissioner, informed Woodford that the choice of lands must not lead to interference or molestation by natives and must be lands that local people would not later claim (Stanmore to Colonial Office 22 September 1899; Colonial Office to Stanmore 3 October 1899 and O'Brien to Woodford 24 November 1899 BSIP 18/III Item 1). Land developments occupied much of Woodford's time in 1899 and 1900. Under the headline *Important British Developments*, the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* (29 May 1900) reported that it 'transpires that the amount of land taken up by the Pacific Islands Company is 200,000 acres' and that the directors of a trading company had been for a survey tour of the islands accompanied by Woodford who was

reported to say there 'is plenty of land for everybody ... millions of acres in fact'. These reports served to encourage land speculators and concessionaries whose activities occupied much time for little gain.

One such concessionaire was Audley Coote, English born but for many years a resident in Tasmania. Coote became a member of the Tasmanian House of Assembly and was an active promoter of large-scale infrastructure projects, mostly rail and telegraph lines. They were notably unsuccessful (O'Neill 1969). Coote was an eminent failure. In 1901 he applied for 4,000 acres of plantation land on Guadalcanal. The area is now central Honiara behind Point Cruz (WPHC 4/IV 167/1901). Coote complained to Woodford about the development clause in the Certificate of Occupation agreement and the length of time the lease was granted. He then tried unsuccessfully to sell the certificate in Sydney. Woodford finally cancelled the license, but after much annoyance. Coote then claimed ownership of St George Island off Isabel. This Woodford reported as a 'pretended claim to the island in question [that] can therefore merit nothing but a summary refusal' (Woodford to O'Brien [undated 1901] WPHC 4/IV 209/1900). Coote's claims and counterclaims occupied much time and filled many pages of official correspondence. Woodford complained bitterly to the High Commissioner of the numerous speculators, 'company promoters and concessionaries' (Allan 1957: 39).

Subsequent to the correspondence between the Pacific Islands Company directors and the Colonial Office a tour of the islands was made in 1900 on the Adelaide Steamships Company steamer *Rob Roy* surveying possible sites for plantations (*The Brisbane Courier* 7 March 1900: 3). The SS *Rob Roy*, built in 1867, was a sizable steam launch of 309 tons that could carry 60 passengers on the Melbourne to Launceston run. It was sold to the Adelaide Steamships Company in 1883. On the Solomon Islands survey mission it was under the command of Capt F. J. Dillamore with Captain Wilson, the Harbour-Master of Fiji, as a pilot. The team sent by the Pacific Islands Company included Albert Ellis, P. Hantenstein and J. Grant from Hong Kong and, it appears from newspaper reports, Oscar Svensen was a member of the original party (*The Brisbane Courier* 7 March 1900: 3; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 28 May 1900: 3). Lt Frederick Lennox Langdale was sent to be the survey director. Langdale, a former Royal Navy officer, had settled in Fiji when he purchased the island of Wakaya off Levuka. He had also been member of the Legislative Council of Fiji. The *Rob Roy* left Sydney on 4 February 1900 and reached Tulagi on 13 March after some mechanical problems in Australia. At Tulagi, Woodford offered the *Lahloo* as a support vessel. The survey team then remained in the islands until 16 May and returned to Sydney on 25 May. Areas selected were on Gizo, Kolombangara, Wana Wana on the New Georgia coast, on Isabel, Choiseul and land on Guadalcanal (Heath 1974a: 75).

This survey expedition to find prospective plantation lands in the Solomons that involved Woodford and the Directors of the Pacific Islands Company cost the company £3,000.

Bennett (1987: 131) remarks that most of the *Rob Roy* survey was done from the foredeck of the ship and that apart from Kolombangara and Vaghena little ground survey was undertaken and that the apparent lack of people living along the areas investigated only added to the prevailing depopulation argument. Certainly, like most European observers, Woodford saw economic potential in what was perceived to be numberless, uninhabited, verdant, fertile islands (Bennett 1987: 146–147; Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1910). O'Brien's instructions to Woodford did not request a fully detailed land survey. He wrote: 'It will be necessary to roughly estimate the areas of the lands selected for the purpose of entry in the leases and the computation of rents to be paid (O'Brien to Woodford 22 November 1899 BSIP 18/III Item 1). However Langdale's report dated May 1900, copies of which are still extant in the archives in Honiara, show that the survey teams spent over two months in the western islands. 25 days were spent surveying Kolombangara and WanaWana alone (see BSIP 18/III Item 1, 18/I/22C and 18/I/22D). This was done by sea, certainly, but numerous shore parties investigated lands upriver and along the foreshores and an attempt was made to climb Kolombangara itself. Langdale clearly knew the cursory nature of his surveying when he wrote that 'we are quite unable to make more than a very superficial inspection of this immense area of land; to do so thoroughly would take years even if it could be done at all' (Langdale to H. E. Denson of Pacific Island Company 31 March 1900 BSIP 18/III Item 1 copies also in 18/I/22C and 22D). The original Langdale report of 70 pages included 14 sketch maps of the islands but only two survive in the Honiara archive collection (see PMB 1205 MP1174/1/306 for a full copy of the report). Kolombangara was strongly recommended as the location of the head station by Langdale. Langdale also paid careful attention to the nature, size and value of the estates of Oscar Svensen and Lars Nielsen and supplied the directors with detailed calculations of the current copra trade and the labour question. Dillmore also supplied a report on the trading stations in the islands and their access from a shipping perspective. He recommended the continued use of the *Rob Roy* as a first class sea boat although it appears its decks and topside were in poor condition and would need attention. The Colonial Office subsequently offered selections of up to 200,000 acres at a nominal rental. This was double Woodford's original suggestion for the company (Woodford to O'Brien 29 May 1900 WPHC 4/IV 91/1898; CO 225 60 42651 contains a précis of negotiations between the Pacific Islands Company and the Colonial Office). The High Commissioner in Suva 'obviously shared Woodford's enthusiasm for the concession because, despite the incredible vagueness of the boundaries, the

lack of any survey, and the sheer perfunctoriness of the boundaries, or, more truly, neglect of the inquiry into who had interests in the land, he acquiesced in the transaction' (Bennett 1987: 131).

Although not happy with the amount of coastline that would be alienated, the size of the concession and the promises made by the company, it seemed to Woodford that the bright commercial future was a reality (Heath 1974a: 75–76). Woodford travelled back to Sydney on the *Rob Roy* and gave an encouraging interview to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (28 May 1900: 3). He reported that Langdale had selected lands, notably on Kolombangara, and stated the Pacific Islands Company had 'practically unlimited funds behind them', for even if 'they only bring half the area they have acquired under cultivation, it will mean an expenditure of millions'. Woodford was to be disappointed with the Pacific Islands Company. From the beginning Lord Stanmore was unimpressed with the conditions attached to Certificates of Occupation that would give the Pacific Islands Company only limited security of title. He wrote personally to the office of the Secretary of State for the Colonies complaining of procedures in the High Commission (Stanmore to Anderson 10 February 1901 CO 225 60 42651; Stanmore to Colonial Office 5 March 1901 BSIP 18/III Item 1). Stanmore's particular complaint was the condition in the certificates that prohibited subletting of leased lands to other parties. Obviously the Pacific Islands Company had no intention of managing all their chosen leases themselves. He was particularly critical of the obtuse comment from the Colonial Office that stated it had 'no prohibition of subletting in regard to certificates now being issued, but that in regard to [the] future complete liberty is reserved to insert such a prohibition if it should be considered desirable' (Colonial Office to Stanmore 15 March 1901 and Stanmore to Colonial Office 12 April 1901 BSIP 18/III Item 1). The decision was finally passed over to O'Brien, the High Commissioner in Suva.

The Pacific Islands Company even began negotiating rights to five islands on the Gizo Reef from Norman Wheatley who himself had only held title to the islands for a little over 6 months (Woodford to O'Brien 28 May 1900 WPHC 4/IV 54/1900). This then raised complaints from Peter Edmund Pratt who claimed ownership of Shelter Islands (Logha). In turn this was refuted by Hiqava and Wange and other *baqara* from Roviana (Woodford to O'Brien 26 February 1902 WPHC 4/IV 55/1900). Actually, Wheatley had bought the Logha islands for only about £30 in trade in 1899. He later sold them to Lever's Pacific Plantations in 1911 for £12,000 (Bennett 1897: 143). Clearly everyone—traders, planters and even the local *baqara*—were speculating in land. At the other end of the scale Woodford was reported as saying that it was possible for small capitalists with £4,000 or £5,000 to start a viable coconut plantation, but that it would take five to six years for the trees to reach maturity. The cost of clearing and planting the land was estimated to be £10,000. These figures were not dissimilar to those

presented to Stawell by his stockbroker in Melbourne. No estimate for housing, wages to plantation workers, storage facilities or transportation to markets was given. The push to expand commercial plantations was also premised on the belief that local people lived in subsistence affluence for 'natives have so few wants that they won't make copra except to supply their limited requirements' (*The Sydney Daily Telegraph* 29 May 1900; see also Stawell 1910). This too was incorrect.

The Pacific Islands Company canvassed for 99-year leases over vast estates of declared waste land. The claim of 200,000 acres noted in newspaper articles was certainly the company objective in 1900 and 1901. However, when the German plantation and trading firm, DHPG, submitted a claim for title over large amounts of land that they had purchased in the northern islands, now part of the British protectorate the Pacific Islands Company was forced reconsider its position (Foreign Office to Colonial Office 3 October 1900 CO 225 60 32343 includes statement respecting claims on land and translated copies of bills of purchase). Much of the land claimed by the German company comprised coastal property on Choiseul and Isabel and some on Guadalcanal. The company was not backed by the German government according to Colonial Office reports but they were making equal claims to land in Bougainville and lands now in the British territory in the south (Colonial Office to Pacific Islands Company 11 November 1901 and 12 February 1902 BSIP 18/III Item 1). The Colonial Office preferred the matter to be handled in the courts but political considerations were paramount. Woodford's arguments against respecting the German claims were dismissed despite his threat to tender his resignation if they were admitted. He wrote in confidence to John Arundel about the High Commissioner's actions but copies of the confidential letters—obviously passed on by Arundel—made their way onto the Colonial Office files (Woodford to Arundel 30 September 1900 CO 225 60 42651). Woodford was not pleased with the arrangement, and was angry with the High Commission in Fiji for even entertaining the validity of the German claims, but his complaints were considered 'childish' (Heath 1974a: 77; Woodford to O'Brien 3 July and 26 September 1900 WPHC 91/1898).

And so, in 1902, the directors of Pacific Islands Company were informed that, on surrender of the deeds to the land claimed by DHPG, the Colonial Office would grant the company rights to 200,000 acres and be paid £1,500. The Pacific Islands Company subsequently purchased the outstanding German claims, as certified by a notary public in Hamburg, for £2,000 and then sold them to the Crown (Heath 1974a: 77; Heath 1979: 102; Hooke 1971: 232). At first, the Colonial Office, notorious for its parsimony, offered the company £1,500 with a rent abatement of £1,000 for what the officials considered a 'considerable service to His Majesty's Government'. Stanmore and his fellow directors were not without position and influence. They counter-offered a sale of £2,000 with

a rent abatement of £500 (Colonial Office to Stanmore 17 September 1902 BSIP 18/III Item 1; Stanmore to Colonial Office 11 August 1902 CO 225 64 33134). The transaction was designed to sell to the Crown full proprietorship of lands owned by DHPG. Subsequent to this the Pacific Islands Company was reconstructed into a paper company Pacific Islands Company (1902) Limited and it was this company that finalised the transaction with the Colonial Office (PMB 1205 MP1174/1/206 Pacific Islands Company (1902) Memorandum and Articles of Association). In December 1902 the Crown Agents for the Colonies, through the High Commissioner, paid Pacific Islands Company (1902) Ltd its £2,000 and the deeds were made over the Crown (Colonial Office to Pacific Islands Company 25 December 1902 BSIP 18/III Item 1; a file letter Pacific Islands Company to Colonial Office dated 30 December 1902 contains full details of the deeds). The company was then granted title to 193,490 acres of land in the islands on a 99 year lease (PMB 1205 MP1174/1/216 Certificate of Occupation states 189,400 acres). The largest component was 70,000 acres on Kolombangara. When the Protectorate was subsequently debited with an account for the £1,500 that had to be repaid within ten years at 3.5 per cent interest, Woodford's anger over the transactions was justified. It was also obvious that the company was not going to develop a plantation economy in the islands. The repayments to the High Commission over ten years at 3.5 per cent totalled £2,025. It was 'a debt Woodford never forgave the High Commission' (Heath 1979: 102).

The Pacific Islands Company, despite its prominent directors, was never capitalised successfully. The licences to remove guano or to plant coconuts on small isolated islands in the Pacific did not guarantee economic viability. The sheer size of the Western Pacific meant that managing small-scale operations in isolated areas was financially risky. When the company was dissolved in 1902 it owed £60,000 (Hookey 1971: 230). Woodford, quickly disenchanted with the Pacific Islands Company, soon abandoned any hopes that they would establish their large-scale plantations in the islands. Seeking economic development of the protectorate and freedom from dependency on the Imperial treasury funds, he approached Sir William Lever of Lever Brothers to invest in the islands. The directors of Pacific Islands Company tried unsuccessfully to sell off their Certificates of Occupation to Lever but he was only interested in freehold title over alienated lands (WPHC 10/IX Item 239). In 1906, Lever Brothers' Pacific subsidiary, Lever's Pacific Plantations Limited, was able to secure the remaining Pacific Islands Company concessions in the Solomon Islands for £5,000 (Heath 1979: 111; Bennett 1987: 128; Harcourt to Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd 13 December 1911 WPHC 4/IV 61/1905). The Colonial Office tried unsuccessfully to claim half this transfer money. The Pacific Islands Company case, despite the high profile of its directors, had been a fiasco.

The question of land tenure was fundamental to the development of a plantation economy. The only successful plantations were those established on land acquired directly from the Solomon Islanders and not on leased land held under Certificates of Occupation. The Certificates of Occupation were not formal leases or sales of land by the Crown. They guaranteed and protected the holder's occupation rights under British law and, while not granting proprietary rights, prevented unauthorised occupation by another party. However, they prevented the land from being sub-leased to another party. The process was a matter of policing land use rather than land lease or sale (Hookey 1971: 232–233).

First decade of the new century

In the meantime, Tulagi was expanded as a government station. Gizo was cleared and a police house, boat house and landing wharf constructed. By 1902 Woodford was sending his annual report to Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, rather than through Suva. In the covering letter attached to the annual report for 1902/1903 Woodford wrote that the report was forwarded to London to 'avoid the delay of transmission via Fiji' (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers. 1905: 3). There was obviously some internal disagreement over the content or the editing of the reports. There would be no annual reports for the period 1905/1906 to 1911/1912 with no explanation for the suspension of seven years. These corresponded with the years when Everard im Thurn was High Commissioner. Woodford and im Thurn had a poor working relationship exacerbated by the even worse relationship between Woodford and the Secretary of the High Commission, Merton King. No reports would be submitted for the three years from 1915/1916 to 1917/1918 although that coincided with the First World War and can be more easily explained. Administrative attention in London was far removed from the Solomon Islands.

By 1902 the white population of the islands had increased to 83. The passing of the *Pacific Island Labourers Act* 1901 (1 Edward VII 16 1901) on 17 December and the *Immigration Restriction Act* 1901 (1 Edward VII 17 1901) on 23 December signalled the formal ending of the recruitment of Pacific Islander labourers for Queensland sugar plantations. Active recruitment could continue until 31 March 1904 under the legislation but any labourers remaining in Queensland after 1906 would be deported to their homes (Moore 2000). Now fewer Queensland labour vessels were coming to the Solomons to recruit. This resulted in a decline in shipping licence fees. Again, expenditure exceeded revenue in the rather impoverished Protectorate that remained heavily dependent on export of copra, ivory nuts, pearl shell and turtle shell. In order to stress the need for a direct steamer service from Tulagi to Sydney, Woodford listed three and a half pages of imports, mostly obtained from Sydney, in his annual report. Among the

usual products—beads, boxes, clothing, food stuffs, crockery, furniture, and hardware—was the continued reliance on tobacco (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1902: 11). But realistically speaking there was little need for a regular steamer service that would be uneconomical. Only a portion of land had been allocated to white settlers at this time. By 1902 less than 1,500 acres in total had been planted and the main plantation was 400 acres located at Lungga (Lungga Point) on the northern coast of Guadalcanal. Other areas were also on Guadalcanal at Aola (200 acres) and Kaukau (Kaoka) (100 acres). Oscar Svensen was a major partner in all these ventures and the only other substantial development was the Macdonald plantation at Fauro in the Shortland Islands where 300 acres had been planted with coconuts. Woodford agreed on 15 May 1903 to the sale of 2,000 acres of land between the Mberande and Mbalisuna Rivers on Guadalcanal between Oscar Svensen and the local people. The price was 3,000 porpoise teeth (valued at £16/10/-), five cases of tobacco, each case containing 200 pounds (value £50), £5 in cash and calico, cigarette paper and matches valued at £5. The total value was £76/10/- (AU NBAC Z385/434).

By 1903 the white population of the Solomon Islands had reached 91. There were only four government officials in control, presumably Woodford, Mahaffy and two assistants. Members of missions and government officials did not pay capitation tax and so the revenue from the fee only amounted to £256 for the entire year. Station licences earned a further £206. Again there was a sharp fall-off in shipping licences paid by vessels in the Queensland labour trade. Between 1901 and 1902, £960 was earned from vessel licenses. In the next financial year only £660 was earned, but in the year 1903–1904 only £440 was earned (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1903: 5). Clearly a move to a viable plantation economy was desperately needed to keep the fragile economy alive. Local labour was needed to develop a plantation economy but as long as men had the opportunity to travel to Queensland and Fiji, local plantations would suffer. It was essential that the labour trade to Fiji and Samoa be stopped for economic reasons not moral ones.

The final phase of the Pacific labour trade

Although legislation had been passed in Australia to formally end the Pacific labour trade, the Protectorate was still being destabilised by its fall-out. Samuel (later Sir Samuel) Griffith, the Lieutenant Governor of Queensland, forwarded to Woodford a letter from Robert (later Sir Robert) Philp regarding the continued smuggling of arms into the Solomon Islands by men employed on the labour vessels. These were not returning labourers but men who had signed on as crew in order to travel backwards and forwards to Queensland. The smuggling of

arms had not been brought under control. Mahaffy reported that most Malaita men had guns because 'not a single labour vessel leaves Queensland without a quality of arms, ammunition, and dynamite concealed on board' (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1903: 15). The fine for concealing weapons of £25 was not an impediment for in many cases it was paid in cash at once.

Arms were being bought in Papua and German New Guinea and smuggled into the Solomons. Philp was the former partner of James Burns in the trading company Burns, Philp & Co and director of the company instrumental in establishing the labour trade. In his new position as Premier of Queensland he wrote to Woodford expressing his regret that no breaches of the arms trade regulations could be found by customs officers in Queensland ports. In Philp's opinion it would be necessary for the Protectorate to provide land for some returnees for in 'many cases it will be impossible for these unfortunates to return to the places whence they were recruited, as they left home in the first instance to escape the punishment of their own misdeeds'. Philp was being spurious. Not all men had run away from their past misdeeds, many had recruited to gain access to much needed trade goods, others had by now converted to Christianity and they were most certainly not 'unfortunates'. Philp also noted that Malaitans who had made up about two-thirds of labourers recruited for the sugar cane plantations could not enter the copra trade and so continued to have only their labour to sell. This correspondence was reprinted in the Protectorate's annual report (Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1902: 12–14). The alienation of land for commercial plantations combined with the large, floating, population of Malaitan men with little to trade except their labour at first seemed to be the making of a viable plantation economy, but in fact it was continuing a cycle of disadvantage that would lead to even greater social and economic stress.

When recruiting for the sugar cane plantations ceased on 31 December 1903 it was estimated that about 9,500 Melanesian labourers remained in Queensland awaiting repatriation back to their island homes. This included about 4,000 Solomon Islanders. Options for the resettlement of returned labourers were canvassed. Woodford wrote to the High Commissioner to say that all men should first be sent to Tulagi where they could then be questioned on personal choices of settlement and occupation. Adherents of main Christian religions should be settled near mission stations where they could access education, health and religious services. In the case of the Melanesian Mission these stations had to be staffed by permanent white missionaries. Other men could be settled on 'waste lands' on the north coast of Guadalcanal. This assumed that the Guadalcanal people along the coast no longer claimed that land, or used it. Another historical fallacy with major repercussions (Woodford to Jackson 2 May 1903 WPHC 4/IV

153/1902). Both Mahaffy and Woodford used every opportunity to press home the need for a small steamer to replace the *Lahloo* that could be becalmed for weeks. The sailing vessel was also the victim of rough weather and considerably damaged on a voyage to Santa Cruz in October 1900 (Woodford to O'Brien 21 November 1900 and O'Brien to Colonial Office 2 January 1901 CO 225 61 6969). The request for a small steamer was a reasonable one. Policing the islands was difficult without adequate transport. Malaita was a good case in point.

The impact of the Pacific labour trade on Malaitan society was never addressed during the colonial period but the issues were well known. They included fighting between inland and coastal peoples, arms smuggling, the high number of guns on the island, and the lack of a permanent police and mission presence. The external labour movement was now to be replaced by internal labour migration (Woodford to Im Thurn 21 February 1908 WPHC 4/IV 82/1898). This would create many complex problems. Malaitan society had been destabilised by the actions of labour recruiters and revenge attacks were not uncommon. Mahaffy made one unsuccessful attempt to pacify north Malaita in September 1902. A series of murders had taken place on the island. When a young man died in Queensland his father paid for the murder of a white man as compensation. Consequently, the recruiter on board the *Rhoderick Dhu*, James McCabe, was shot. The three other murders involved local people: Bauleni, the Fijian wife of one Malaitan man, was killed for her evangelising attempts; another man, Aimisia, who returned from labour indenture in Fiji, was murdered on the way to his gardens; and a Big-man from the northern Malu'u region killed a number of people on an island off Auki (Boutilier 1983: 52-53). Mahaffy on the HMS *Sparrow* went to Oru Island off Malu'u and the ship bombarded the island, destroying all the huts. The village pigs were also killed. These attempts at suppression of the Malaitan situation had little impact. Mahaffy reported to the Woodford and the Western Pacific High Commission that 'I am sure that eighty per cent of the men [of Malaita] are so [armed] and to hope for the pacification of a warlike and quarrelsome race under such circumstances is surely merest nonsense' (Boutilier 1983: 54 quoting Mahaffy to Woodford 1 October 1902; WPHC 4/IV 7/1903). He also believed that coastal people in Malaita, the saltwater people, sheltered behind a time-honoured tradition that bushmen were always the guilty party. Mahaffy considered that hardly any outrage was committed on the island without the assistance of the saltwater people (Mahaffy to Woodford 1 October 1902 CO 225 65 7462). Im Thurn considered it the duty of the Resident Commissioner to patrol the islands 'steadily and constantly'. This was unrealistic. It was properly the duty of a locally based patrol service, not a Resident Commissioner. It was quickly realised that on Malaita white men and government officials could not penetrate more than a few hundred metres from the shore (Boutilier 1983: 55).

Mahaffy and the High Commission

Mahaffy had a low opinion of the Solomon Islanders and, in racist terms that were normal for the time, he wrote they could be described as having 'manners none, customs beastly'. In dealing with the people he observed, with some perception, two strict rules: never fail to fulfil promises made whatever the cost or sacrifice, and be patient. Following his marriage in Melbourne on 16 March 1903 to Enid Boyd, daughter of Captain Theodore Boyd of the North Devon Regiment, he was appointed to the office of the High Commissioner in Suva (*The Argus* 28 March 1903; *The Australian Town and Country Journal* 25 March 1903: 42). As Colonial Secretary and Receiver-General in Fiji he replaced Merton King. After 1908 he became the personal assistant to Im Thurn who accusing him of being 'pro native to an extent that was dangerous' (Golden 1993: 237 quoting from Scarr 1967a: 293; Im Thurn to Colonial Office 20 December 1909 CO 225 87 3121). Mahaffy was often sent on long inspection tours of the Western Pacific and his recommendations generally ignored (Scarr 1967a: 287). His trip to the New Hebrides reported on French developments and his opinions on the depopulation of the islands. Im Thurn wrote to the Colonial Office requesting the return of Merton King whom he called 'an exceptionally highly trained administrator under the Crown Colony system and has an exceptional knowledge of the administrative requirements of the Pacific'. As Assistant to the High Commissioner Im Thurn stated would be 'better than any man I know'. The implications being he was better in the position than Mahaffy (Mahaffy to Im Thurn 13 November 1909 and Im Thurn to Colonial Office 22 December 1909 CO 225 87 3121). Their long working relationship must have been strained at times. Merton King must have been a difficult man, even if he were a capable administrator. When James Burns wrote from his home, 'Gowan Brae' at North Parramatta, asking for information on Woodford's health he commented: 'I suppose you have heard Mr Merton King of Fiji has been appointed to take the place of Captain Rason [in the New Hebrides], who is retiring to go home to England. From all I hear Mr Merton King is not too popular, or has not been too popular in Fiji, as many of the actions which were blamed upon Im Thurn have been actually caused by him' (AU NBAC N115/488). Indeed, the news would not have been a surprise to Woodford.

Mahaffy was sent back to the Solomon Islands in 1908 to make a long report on the progress of the Protectorate. He wrote that 'the aboriginal population is dying off very fast indeed' and blamed this on the peace and prosperity now present. Like others Mahaffy believed that warfare 'kept the minds of the community alert and their bodies active'. His Anglo-Irish background came to the fore when describing plantation managers. He considered the average Australian to be a racist undesirable and considering many of the Lever's managers were Australian, this meant trouble. Mahaffy thought these men

unfit for life in the tropics (Mahaffy to Im Thurn 21 December 1908 WPHC 4/IV 830/1908). Im Thurn would have agreed with these comments and at least understood the pompous language.

Mahaffy was sent back to the Gilbert Islands as Acting Resident Commissioner to prepare a report for the High Commission on social and economic changes on the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and on Ocean Island (Banaba) following the commencement of phosphate mining (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1910; Macdonald 2001: 85). His report on the Gilbert and Ellice Islands is short but it is a useful summary of colonial attitudes to circumstances then developing in the Western Pacific (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1910). The situation in the Gilbert Islands was very different from that of the Solomon Islands. By 1909 a native tax had been implemented and this funded the appointment of a High Chief, Magistrates, Scribes—in charge of village accounts and community records—the police and the *Kaubure*, a small group of advisers. Villages were clean, roads were well constructed and all islands had hospitals. Despite this order and good management Mahaffy found that the ‘rapid decline of the simple arts and crafts among the natives is to be much regretted and tends to accentuate the extreme monotony of their lives’ (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1910: 4). He much regretted the change in diet from coconuts, pandanus and fish to the ‘cultivated taste which demands rice, meat, sugar and biscuits’ and the ‘[c]lothes of shocking shape and of atrocious colour have almost replaced the picturesque kilt of leaves or fine woven mat, and in their canoes, now no longer laboriously sewn together of small and narrow coconut planks, but constructed of American or Australian timbers’. This modernity was attributed to the economic influence of the phosphate mine on Ocean Island. Mahaffy too saw these islanders as doomed. He wrote that ‘imported diseases, the wearing of unsuitable clothes, the alarming increase in phthisis, too close a system of inter-marriage, monotony of life, poverty of the food supply, and, finally, the new feature of the disinclination of the women to bear more than a limited number of children and the increased and increasing number of sterile marriages—all these affect the population and accelerate its diminution’ (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1910: 4). The gradual fading away of the islanders would have one benefit. Those islands would make valuable coconut plantations and ‘should prove veritable mines of wealth to their fortunate [white] possessors’ (Great Britain. House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers 1910: 5). The poor Gilbertese, it seemed, could do nothing right.

Pacific Phosphate Company Ltd

The Pacific Islands Company, a failure as a plantation developer, branched out into more lucrative phosphate mining. In 1902 the Pacific Islands Company split to become Pacific Phosphate Company and Pacific Islands Company (1902) Ltd, a paper company whose only assets were the undeveloped concessions in the Solomon Islands (Heath 1974a: 78; PMB 1176 and PMB 1206). In 1905 Stanmore also announced his intention of forming a subsidiary company under his paper company, Pacific Islands Company (1902) Ltd. To promote this new Solomon Islands Syndicate he commissioned a report on plantation prospects by L. F. Giblin, an English tropical agriculture expert. Giblin was tasked with studying the prospects for the cultivation of coconuts, rubber, cotton, ramie, coffee and cocoa but quickly declared copra to be the only viable crop. He was also commissioned to find ways of subleasing excess lands and engaging in trading. At first he found Woodford hospitable and was provided with all facts and figures available but it was clear that Woodford, after the Pacific Islands Company debacle, had 'declared himself hostile to the purposes of the Syndicate'. Giblin was also told that a new syndicate had no legal right to claim the Pacific Islands Company concessions. Giblin, it seems, spent six weeks touring the islands making an accurate assessment of the local plantation economy, all for nothing. Stanmore could not raise £30,000 to save his company from bankruptcy and he would have known this when he sent Giblin to the islands. In hindsight Woodford's lack of support for Giblin is understandable but the file comment made in Suva reads: 'Mr Woodford's attitude as reported by Mr Giblin was unfortunate' (Giblin to Stanmore 21 July 1905 and Woodford to im Thurn 10 February 1906 WPHC 4/IV 70/1906). Perhaps it was, but chaos had been looming since 1900. The company was dissolved in June 1905 when the concessions were purchased by Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd. Sir William Lever had purchased shares in Pacific Islands Company (1902) Ltd in order to give him a foothold in the copra trade at little cost. Those shares then gave him control of the Pacific Islands Company copra concessions (Bennett 1987: 128; Heath 1974a: 29).

Albert Ellis, an analyst and prospector for the Pacific Islands Company, had confirmed the presence of large deposits of guano on Ocean Island (Banaba) in 1899 (Shlomowitz and Munro 1992: 104). Phosphates had also been found on Nauru Island, at that time a German protectorate. In 1902 the phosphate interests of the Pacific Islands Company were taken over by a new company, Pacific Phosphate Company. John Arundel and Lord Stanmore then financed new mining projects on both islands in partnership with Jaluit Gesellschaft, a Hamburg based company. Mining guano on 'waste or unoccupied lands' could only be undertaken with a licence from the High Commissioner or the Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert Islands (3 J. Soc. Comp. Legis. Ns 329 1901). Under

the *Gilbert and Ellice (Guano) Regulation no 2 of 1900* full rights to mine were given to the Pacific Phosphate Company. Woodford, angry over the acquiescence of the Western Pacific High Commission in relation to the DHPG land claims in the northern Solomons, was now angry about the share dealings between Jaluit Gesellschaft and the Pacific Phosphate Company (Heath 1978: 78). Under the agreement, Jaluit Gesellschaft received one-third of any profits (Firth 1973: 25). Woodford had reason to be concerned with the partnership. Jaluit Gesellschaft was a merger between DHPG and the Micronesian interests of Robertson and Hearnheim. The name Jaluit came from the atoll in the Marshall Islands where Hearnheim had a successful trading operation (Firth 1973: 13, 24). It was yet another business coup for DHPG.

The administration in the Solomon Islands may have been unrewarded by the commercial dealings with the Pacific Islands Company but the inhabitants of Banaba were to be treated even worse by the Pacific Phosphate Company. The indigenous Banabans were powerless to exact adequate compensation and royalty payments from large, well-capitalised, influential trading companies (Firth 1973: 26). An agreement was signed giving the Pacific Phosphate Company exclusive rights to mine for 999 years at a rental of only £50 a year in an arrangement that was to come under strong condemnation. The mining licence in effect became political annexation of the island by Britain. In understating the value of Ocean Island phosphate by half, Pacific Phosphate Company secured a low 6 pence per ton royalty payment to Banabans that only began in 1906. These terms of arrangement were specified in an agreement with the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC 10/IX Item 242). The relationship between the Pacific Phosphate Company and the Colonial Office became the subject of much public comment. The connection between Stanmore, Herbert, Arundel and the Colonial Office was considered a minor scandal when the inequities of the leasing arrangement and royalty payments were made public knowledge late in 1908 (*The Fiji Times* October 1908 copied from *The New Age*, London, 10 October 1908; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 9/29). In particular, Stanmore's participation as chairman of the Pacific Phosphate Company was at 'variance with his established humanitarian concern for the rights of islanders after European settlement' (Newbury 2010: 178). The directors, all men with knowledge, influence, and experience of the Pacific, had little regard for the future of the Banaban people.

Few Banabans chose to work at the mines and, with overseas labour migration closed to Gilbertese from the mid-1890s, the only well paid employment open to men was on Ocean Island. This meant that the Gilbertese workers became another case where a colonial government created an exclusive recruiting zone. They reserved the labour supply within the protectorate for one particular industry. The wage in 1907 was 32 shillings (£1/12/-) a month for the first six

months and then 40 shillings (£2) a month after that. At £21/12/- for the first year and then £24 a year for the following year it was considerably higher than the plantation wage of £12 a year but work at the mines was hard and dirty (Shlomowitz and Munro 1992: 113, 115). With the price of phosphate increasing and high profits to be made from mining, Stanmore wrote urgently to the Colonial Office requesting action on plans to import Japanese mine workers. He commented, patronisingly, that the Board of the company would 'at all times *prefer* to employ Polynesians, if their services can be procured. Their employment is less costly than that of the Japanese, and they are more docile and more easily controlled' (Stanmore to Colonial Office 31 December 1907 CO 225 80 440). When Japanese were introduced as semi-skilled contract labourers they proved to be less docile, as Stanmore ruefully predicted. Mining caused major damage to both land and water resources forcing the relocation of many residents. Commitments for compensation to Banabans were never realised. The mining operations were highly profitable for Pacific Phosphate Company, who saw profits of £1,750,000 between 1900 and 1913 while Banabans were paid less than £10,000 royalties (Macdonald 2001: 99). Compared with the paltry amount offered for rental this was one of the more despicable examples of environment vandalism in the Western Pacific. It was compounded by being countenanced by Lord Stanmore, a former High Commissioner of the Western Pacific.

Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd

The Pacific Islands Company and the Pacific Phosphate Company were not the only industrial capitalists interested in the Solomon Islands. A major player in the plantation economy would be Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd, a subsidiary of the large Lever Brothers. The firm was created by William Hesketh Lever, the son of a successful grocer in north England, who was educated within a strict Calvinist philosophy. He later remarked that the 'grocery trade has been a university training for me' (Church and Clark 2001: 531). As a junior partner of his family business in 1872 he expanded the operations throughout northern England. In the early stage the firm bought bar soaps wholesale and then retailed them under the name 'Sunlight'. The product, 'Sunlight Self-Washer Soap', was seen as innovative for its distinctive packaging and content, and proved immensely popular. Lever developed a soap made from a mixture of copra and pine kernel oils rather than from the old fashioned animal tallow. To protect it from the open air the soap bars were individually wrapped in imitation parchment, a practice adopted from American soap makers (Church and Clark 2001: 532).

Lever then expanded using £4,000 borrowed from his father. His company, Lever & Co, operated from a small business and factory in Warrington, with Lever as the manager and cashier, and a works manager in charge of the soap boiling.

Within three years 'Sunlight Soap' was the largest selling soap in Britain. Lever subsequently introduced the 'Lifebuoy Soap' brand and acquired the 'Pears' soap brand. Lever moved from Warrington to a new factory site located near Liverpool on the Mersey that he called Port Sunlight. Here on 50 acres, later expanded to 500 acres, he established one of the first purpose-built factory and worker housing estate with high standards in design, leisure amenities and other community services. It even had a literary and science society. Lever constructed a carefully managed positive image of himself and his company by fostering a strong corporate culture in response to the prevailing discourses of Imperialism, alienating industrialisation and the problems of economic decline in the late-19th century (Rowan 2003: 2). The firm, incorporated in England in 1890 as Lever Brothers Ltd, was reincorporated in Australia in 1894. By 1897 Lever Brothers Ltd had established an Australian factory at the western end of Balmain in Sydney adjacent to wharf facilities at White Bay. Here the factory extracted oil from imported copra. This purified oil was shipped back to the main firm at Port Sunlight. Lever Brothers became a limited liability company in 1890 with a capital of £300,000. Later it went public with more than £1.5 million in capital (£600 million in current values) (Rowan 2003: 6). Lever Brothers was one of the remarkable economic success stories of the late-19th century.

Lever was skilled at marketing and introducing new types of soap products. Many became famous brand names. 'Lux Flakes', for example, commenced production in 1900. Between 1910 and 1913 several more acquisitions widened Lever's range of products and reduced those of his competitors. By 1905 the Lever Brothers Ltd factory in Sydney was crushing 13,000 tons of copra yearly, all of it from Pacific plantations. Even the by-products of the crushing plant were profitable. Refuse was made into coconut cakes used as cattle feed and coconut oil was exported to Germany for use as butter fat (*The Brisbane Courier* 17 June 1905: 6). Having a factory in Australia was also an economic decision for it meant the company avoided import duties and Sydney became a base for further expansion into the Pacific. When merged with Margarie Unie in 1930 it became Unilever, the first modern multinational trading company. More than 500 subsidiary companies now come under the Unilever name.

William Lever (later Lord Leverhulme of the Western Isles) exemplified the Victorian doctrine that hard work, rather than genius, led to success. Calvinist ideals of self-culture, self-control and growth in knowledge and wisdom were the essential characteristics of a complete man. These conservative values fed neatly into the social and class-based paternalism of the late-19th and early-20th centuries (Rowan 2003: 11). This paternalism had deep roots in society at all levels of English society. Landowners, industrialists, civil servants workers and labourers were conditioned by the residual aristocratic culture that still permeated British consciousness. They were all constrained by the habits

of deference. Paternalism held that society was based on hierarchy and that even in a pluralistic society each social sphere had its own hierarchy. This social paternalism mirrored the industrial paternalism of Lever's company. It was further mirrored in colonial paternalism and missionary humanitarianism that was evangelical paternalism thinly disguised. Within Lever Brothers and the subsidiary companies an effective corporate culture maintained employee loyalty and built familial identity. Lever was an industrial paternalist but it was clear that this structural relationship between employer and employee was applicable only within white Anglo-Saxon communities. In contrast Lever's Pacific Plantation Ltd would have a poor reputation in its dealings with Melanesian plantation workers in the Solomon Islands.

The company developed a thriving export trade throughout the world and the factories needed larger volumes of copra than could be provided from small-scale beach traders. Lever was astute and determined not to rely on other suppliers for raw materials. The most economical solution was ownership of land and for the company to control management of large-scale commercial copra plantations in the islands. It was also clear to the financially troubled administration in Tulagi that attracting Lever Brothers to the Solomon Islands would be a great economic advantage. Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd (LPPL) was formed in 1902, and pointedly, at the same time William Lever was appointed to the board of the Pacific Phosphate Company. In 1905, Joseph Meek, Chairman of Lever Brothers Australia and Chairman of Directors for Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd, began buying freehold land from islanders as well as from individual traders and the many unsuccessful small-scale planters. Meek and his family left Australia on the New South Wales government steamer the *Victoria* under charter to investigate prospective plantation lands in the Solomon Islands, German New Guinea, Singapore and Malaya. Lever's Pacific Plantations certainly had capital to invest. The tour of the *Victoria* alone cost the company £6,000. In 1903, Oscar Svensen had tried to sell his substantial land holdings along with three schooners, one ketch and three cutters, and other assets valued at £11,000 to Burns, Philp & Co for £10,000. At that stage Burns Philp considered themselves merchants and shipping agents, not planters, and so declined his offer. Svensen had also purchased Gavutu for £3,000 from Lars Nielsen who retired to Denmark in poor health after more than 20 years in the islands (Bennett 1981: 182). The Gavutu property contained a substantial house by this stage that was raised on piles with the lower floor enclosed to form part tradestore and part living room. The file note by Walter Henry Lucas states 'must risk Levers' (AU NBAC N115/589). Lucas, an aggressive dealer, lost this time. Svensen successfully negotiated the sale of his lands and islands to Levers for £6,500 as well as acted as agent for the sale of the remaining concessions owned by the Pacific Islands Company for £5,000 (Statement of Expenditure 15 January 1912 WPHC 4/IV 61/1915). By 1907 when Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd began to develop properties in

earnest, Svensen had sold the company more than 50,000 acres of land (Bennett 1987: 143). A wealthy man, Svensen retired to 'Norway', his large home at Galloway's Hill overlooking the Brisbane River. Both Nielsen and Svensen were able business men in a region where business failures were more common. When Svensen was earning between £2,000 and £6,000 (£690,000 to £2 million in current values) a year, Woodford as Resident Commissioner, was earning only £300 (£104,000 in current values) a year (Bennett 1981: 181; Golden 1993: 132).

Soon the *Brisbane Courier* (17 June 1905: 6) reported that Meek had secured nearly 80,000 acres in the Solomons: 51,000 acres from former traders and planters and 28,870 acres obtained by purchase from local people (Hookey 1971: 237). This was distributed on more than 14 islands. Some of the land obtained under Certificates of Occupation had the leases extended from 99 years to 999 years. In this way, in 1904 the company obtained some of the prime land on the Guadalcanal plains along the northern coast of the island in the areas of Tenaru, Lungga and Kukum. The Solomon Islands were favoured, according to Meek, because 'Lever Bros. preferred to only carry on business under the British flag'. Scarr (1967a: 284) stated that im Thurn looked with mixed feelings over Woodford's success in attracting such a prized development as Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd to the Solomon Islands. In fact the involvement was welcomed by a High Commissioner anxious for the islands to become economically self-sufficient. Im Thurn wrote: 'I am strongly of the opinion that it is highly desirable if the Solomon Islands Protectorate is ever to be developed that Lever's Pacific Plantations should be encouraged to take up land there' (Heath 1974a: 81 quoting im Thurn to Colonial Office 9 May 1905 CO 225 69; see also WPHC 10/IX Item 240). The single most important reason for encouraging Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd was the need to reduce the already overstretched budget of the protectorate. All this occurred at a time when Woodford's reputation at the High Commission in Suva was tarnished, both by his own rashness and inability to conform to rules set by his superiors, as much as by their inability to give him independence of action.

By 1911, having obtained much of Norman Wheatley's properties, Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd had obtained 218,820 acres in the western and central Solomons under various tenures (Woodford to High Commissioner 2 February 1911 BSIP 18/1/22D). Once again, Woodford was to be disappointed. The company chose not to develop the leased lands until all the freehold lands were planted. The sheer size of the holdings, their scattered location on many islands, and the high establishment costs of infrastructure and employment were such that Lever's Pacific Plantations would never develop all their acquisitions (Hookey 1971: 237). By 1911, William Lever wanted to dispose of unsuitable lands and keep only productive coconut plantation areas but the Colonial Office declined to accept the proposal (McDowell, Secretary, Lever Brothers to Colonial Office 13

January 1911 BSIP 18/I/22D). Woodford was aware that alienation of customary land would be a major administrative mistake but the land regulations were not designed to clarify tenure, they were designed to raise funds for the administration. The earlier acquisition of freehold land by purchase from islanders gave the administration no revenue. Only an administrative fee was charged on transactions that gave planters Certificates of Occupation. To overcome these difficulties Woodford proposed that the government would buy land from the Solomon Islanders then lease it out to planters at a better return to the administration. The result was that 250,000 acres were alienated as leasehold land. The term was 99 years. Almost 170,000 acres had been purchased from islanders by Europeans. Land claimed to have been secured by purchase or trade before the commencement of records in 1896 totalled 80,000 acres some of which was never occupied. In addition to this, small parcels of land had been obtained by various missions and traders under agreements with local land owners. There are examples of when Woodford withdrew land from transfer to plantation owners when the original land owners were identified (Heath 1974a: 84). Stopping some sales of land, and insisting on strict conformity with the improvement clauses on leases, made Woodford increasingly unpopular with Lever's management. So much so that in 1909 Joseph Meek wrote directly to the Colonial Office: 'His [Woodford's] opposition to Lever's land purchases and his complaints against Lever's employees led to a company official [Meek] to approach the Colonial Office in 1909 requesting Woodford's retirement' (Heath 1974a: 82 quoting from McDowell to Colonial Office 15 March 1909 CO 225 89. Letter includes undated correspondence from Joseph Meek to LPPL advocating Woodford's removal).

Even though the waste land regulations were modified in 1901 and again in 1904 freehold land acquisition continued. A 1912 draft land regulation was considered that would prohibit the sale of any land from a native to a European. This draft regulation recommended three classifications of non-alienated land: native lands, vacant lands, and waste lands. This regulation did not proceed because the Protectorate became involved in contested claims by local people to lands that had already been alienated (Allan 1957: 45). The draft regulation was not approved by the Colonial Office. The waste land legislations were not repealed until 1914. The *Solomons (Land) Regulation of 1914* (King's Regulation no 3 of 1914) consolidated and amended the waste lands regulations by repealing the regulations of 1896, 1901 and 1904. With this act the extensive alienation of land formally ended and a leasehold system was instituted. It had become evident that the concept of 'waste lands' was obsolete. The 1914 land regulation specified that land would legally be one of three types: native lands; private land, being alienated freehold land and public lands; and other alienated leased land (Allen 1957: 41). In future Woodford declared that it would be more convenient to consider that vacant land in the Protectorate was 'practically

non existent' (Jackson 1978: 262). Under the new regulation, the declaration of public lands and native lands—land owned by natives or subject to the exercise by natives of rights of occupation or cultivation—allowed for land *not* owned by natives or *not* cultivated or occupied to be declared public lands when sold to the government (Allan 1957: 40–41). Public lands could then be leased out to non-natives. Subsequently non-natives could hold land under one of three claims: freehold land purchased directly from local people; waste or unoccupied land held under existing Certificates of Occupation; and lands leased under the *Solomons (Land) Regulation of 1914*.

However, transactions between Europeans were not prohibited. Land that had previously been sold for little return to customary owners could be resold at a high market price, especially if the land had been partly developed. In this way Oscar Svensen capitalised on his land sales to Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd. In most cases, the original owners were unaware of the commercial transfer. The land rights initially granted by Melanesians to their European buyers were 'personal, contingent, and indefinite. The rights increasingly assumed by Europeans [in transactions with other Europeans] were transferable, absolute, and permanent' (Lamour 1984: 4). This is perhaps the clearest description of the relationships with the land held by Melanesians and by Europeans. For the former, land use is open to negotiation based on personal relationships, for the latter, ownership of land is binding and permanent. It is a commercial rather than a personal transaction. The concept of land alienation with its dual and contradictory aims at protecting Melanesian owners and European purchasers was in fact one of the reasons for direct colonial intervention. The alienation of land in the Solomon Islands was not unique, nor were the actions taken by the Tulagi administrative considered insensitive at that time. Similar land alienation practices were happening throughout the Pacific. In Australia at this time there was no legal recognition of indigenous land at all and the expropriation of Aboriginal land under the legal fiction of *terra nullius* was simply a device to validate land acquisition. The basic premise in all cases was that local political organisations did not exist. This too was false. The dualism of the colonial period was a double bind that has parallels in the situation today. Writing about land management in independent Melanesian nations, Lamour (1984: 39) stated: 'on one hand they [governments] are supposed to be protecting the custom owners against alienation of their land, and on the other they are supposed to be promoting alienation in the interests of national development or at least the maintenance of government services'.

Burns Philp and the role of Walter Henry Lucas

Burns, Philp & Co long held off acquiring land in the Solomon Islands by concentrating on shipping and trading. Walter Henry Lucas, Island Manager in Sydney, had made a tentative move by securing 100 acres for a trading station at Danae Bay, on both sides of Jetty Point, in Marau Sound in 1898. The price paid was £10 in trade (Woodford to O'Brien 9 November 1898 WPHC 4/IV 10/1899). The area remained largely undeveloped. Lucas, a shrewd, aggressive dealer, was well connected in Australian political circles. He was a confidant of Atlee Hunt and regularly corresponded with James Burns. Lucas is not a minor figure in the colonial history of the Solomon Islands. As Island Manager for Burns Philp, Director of the Solomon Islands Development Company and, after 1914, being influential in the expropriation of German property in New Guinea, he would play a significant role in the economic development of the region. He was an excellent photographer, as the albums in the National Library (National Library of Australia PIC Album 783) and the Australian Museum archives illustrate (AM Archives Capell Collection Solomon Islands Photographs, this album of photographs is by Lucas but was donated to the Museum in 1944 by Dr Arthur Capell, Reader in Oceanic Studies at the University of Sydney). The photographs by Lucas are important social and cultural documents for they provide useful counterpoints to the images taken by Woodford. The Lucas album is a valuable document in the colonial history of the Solomon Islands. A photographic montage in the *Sydney Mail* (3 November 1900: 1051 with text at 1040) of 11 images, copies of those in the album, taken by Lucas surrounding one by Woodford raising the British flag at Kondakanimboko Island in Choiseul Bay brings the presence of Lucas to the fore.

In 1904, Burns Philp also began to move into the plantation economy in the Solomons (WPHC 10/IX Item 241). Lucas, through Atlee Hunt, secured a mail contract with the Australian Government worth £6,000 a year (£2 million a year in current values). The mail service and shipping remained the backbone of Burns Philp's business in the Western Pacific. Tourism was also developing, stimulated by brochures advertising exotic travel to Papua, the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands, but tourists were just another commodity that filled the space on company steamers (Burns, Philp & Co 1911 and 1913; Douglas 1997: 58). With the former German islands now in the northern Solomons part of the Protectorate and under British control, the company moved to secure the plantations of the Tindal, Atkinson and Macdonald families in the Shortland Islands. These three families were related through the wives, who were sisters. Lucas negotiated the purchase of the Tindal estates at Faisi and Alu following the death of Nicholas Tindal and his wife, who left one daughter and three stepchildren—the Austen children—almost penniless. The trading stations and plantations of the Shortland Islands were the subject of a full-page supplement in the *Queenslander* (22 December 1906: 24) illustrating their productivity and

development. The newspaper coverage was designed to attract the attention of prospective investors. Together with the 800 acres in the northern islands, and the mail contract, Burns, Philp & Co purchased the small island of Makambo in the Tulagi Harbour. This became a sizable trading station and cargo depot for the company in direct competition with Lever's operation on nearby Gavutu. Opposite these stations on Tulagi were the administrative headquarters and ancillary property such as the hospital, jail, hotel and clubhouse, and a small but growing Chinatown built on the drained swampland along the foreshore.

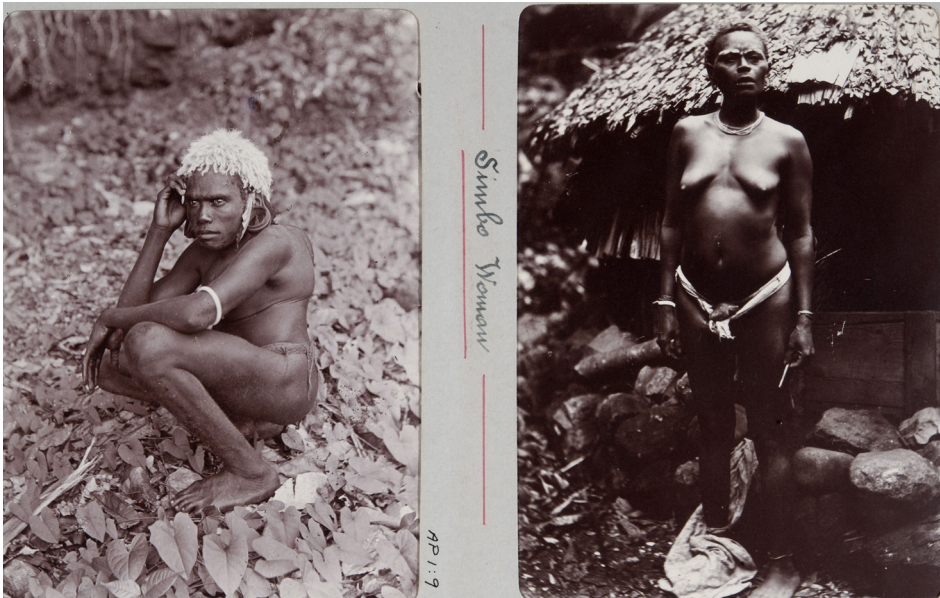


Figure 34. 'Portrait of man, Simbo' and 'Simbo woman'.

Source: AMS330/8 and AMS330/9, Capell Collection, The Australian Museum. Photographs by Walter H. Lucas circa. 1900. See also Amherst and Thomson 1901, Volume 1: 133. The hunchback was a respected young man with deep cultural knowledge.

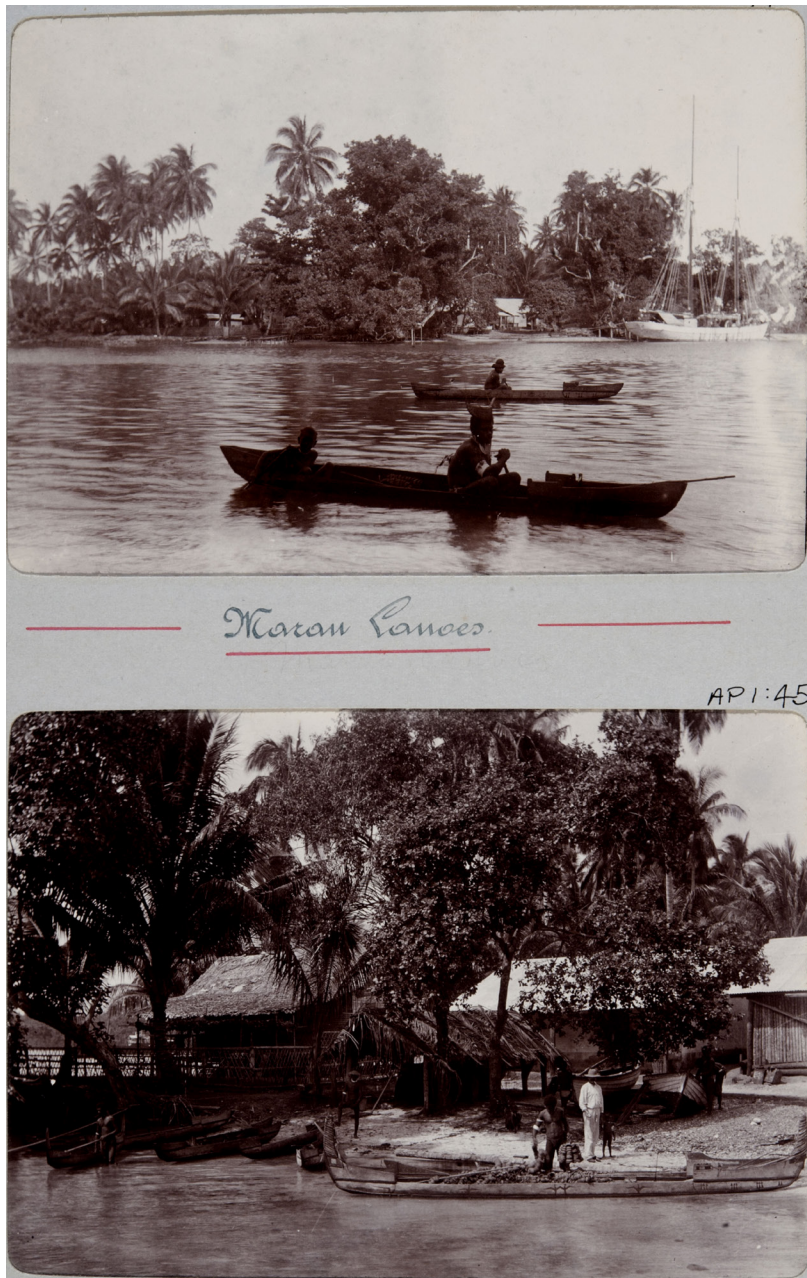


Figure 35. 'Marau canoe' and 'Buying copra [at Oscar Svensen's trading station], Marau'.

Source: AMS330/44 and AMS330/45, Capell Collection, The Australian Museum. Photographs by Walter H. Lucas circa. 1900.



Figure 36. 'Two old headhunters' and 'Portrait of Rubiana [Roviana] man wearing body ornaments'.

Source: AMS330/20 and AMS330/21, Capell Collection, The Australian Museum. Photographs by Walter H. Lucas circa. 1900. *The Sydney Mail* caption for AMS330/20 is Chief, Simbo. See also Amherst and Thomson 1901, Volume 2: 352.

In his confidential reports to James Burns, Lucas advocated freehold purchase of land as his preferred option (AU NBAC N115/2). Lucas was also an active speculator in land. He arranged the purchase of Tetepare Island in November 1907 for £100 on behalf of Burns Philp. In April 1909 this was then sold to the Solomon Islands Development Co, a Burns Philp subsidiary, for £154/14/- (AU NBAC N115/589). Burns Philp also bought Neal Island (Valelua) off the coast of Guadalcanal and land at Mataniko for £600 in 1907. Along with the property came all labourers then under engagement. Burns Philp sought to buy freehold land on the open grasslands of northern Guadalcanal along the Ngalimbu River near Lungga Point. The Teter property was chosen for its potential use as grazing land. Woodford wrote to James Burns on 16 July 1907 to say: 'I think I can get you a block of ten thousand acres of grass land upon Guadalcanar upon Occupation License as Waste Land' (AU NBAC N115/488). Burns certainly considered this suitable in his reply of 12 December. The subsidiary company, Solomon Islands Development Company (SIDC), capitalised in 1908 with £100,000 and with Lucas as its Australian director, then began direct negotiations with land owners (AU NBAC N115/487). It was clear that the land was occupied and used for gardens. The area under question totalled 10,000 acres. The Melanesian Mission had strong influence with the local people

in the region and with mission encouragement the sale was rejected by the land owners. The Guadalcanal people of the plains were not keen to have an influx of Malaitan plantation workers, some of whom would have had experiences as indentured labourers in Queensland or Fiji, living near their communities (Bennett 1987: 135). Despite Woodford's apparent offer nothing eventuated. On 3 November 1908, Lucas complained to Adam Forsyth of the Sydney office that Woodford had done nothing to assist the Solomon Islands Development Company in gaining access to the grass lands they desired. Lucas continued to push for rights to this land in his 23-page report to Burns following a tour of inspection of properties that the Solomon Islands Development Company had obtained elsewhere (AU NBAC N115/488 contains copies of the Solomon Islands Development Company Certificates of Occupation). The claim to Tetera lands was refused by the Colonial Office and all the Solomon Islands Development Company managed to obtain was 650 acres on the coast that could be used as a trading station (AU NBAC N115/2). The Solomon Islands Development Company persisted in its search for plantation land and bought estates formerly owned by white settlers.

Certainly Woodford wrote encouragingly to Burns about possible plantation land on Guadalcanal but Bennett's findings (1987: 135–138) that Woodford was embarrassed when new land regulations were introduced in 1912 is a supposition. The letters to Burns dated 1907 and 1908 were followed by complaints from Lucas about Woodford. Lucas was a regular visitor to Tulagi but he was not an uncritical one. The 1912 land regulation was also a draft law that was not admitted by the Colonial Office. It was not until 1914 that new land regulation came into force. Woodford retired in 1914. He did make presentations to the Colonial Office on behalf of Burns, Philp & Co but then again he also approached them on behalf of Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd and on other issues. It was not until 1917 that the Solomon Islands Development Company managed to obtain Certificates of Occupation on a considerable part of the coastal land near Lungga—the Muvia, Nalimbiu and Gavaga leases—on a 999 year lease (WPHC 10/IX Item 245). This area of 15,000 acres comprised most of the flat, coastal land between the Mataniko and Mbalisuna Rivers. These lands were confirmed only after a special regulation, the *Solomons (Certificate of Occupation Solomon Islands Development Co Ltd) Validation Regulation of 1918* (King's Regulation no 10 of 1918) was created under the *Solomons (Land) Regulation of 1914* (AU NBAC N115/489).



Rubiana
"Tambu" or Native Club House.

API:19



Figure 37. 'Rubiana "Tambu" Native Club House' [actually an ordinary canoe house, *vetu mola*] and 'War-canoe house [communal canoe house, *paele*] of Ingowar [Hiqava]'.

Source: AMS330/18 and AMS330/19, Capell Collection, The Australian Museum. Photographs by Walter H. Lucas circa. 1900.

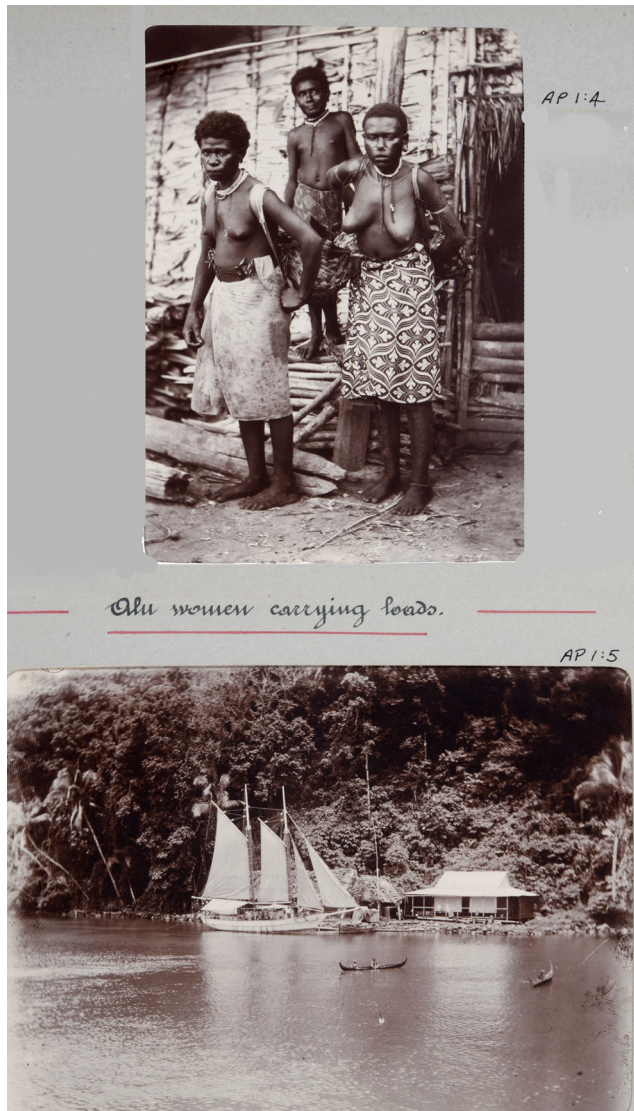


Figure 38. 'Alu women carrying loads' and 'Trading station, Simbo'.

Source: AMS330/4 and AMS330/5, Capell Collection, The Australian Museum. Photographs by Walter H. Lucas circa. 1900. The Simbo trading station was owned by Peter Edmund Pratt.

In 1907, Lucas and a journalist from Sydney, Arthur Wilberforce Jose, wrote a series of letters to the *Sydney Morning Herald* under the anonymous name 'Melanesia' criticising the actions of the Colonial Office in the Western Pacific (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 30 October 1907: 8, 9, 31 October 1907: 10, 1 November 1907: 3, 2 November 1907: 6, 4 November 1907: 5). Lucas actively used his contacts with the newspapers, especially the *Sydney Morning Herald*, to promote

Australian interests in the Pacific. The articles were later collated and published as *British Mismanagement in the Pacific Islands* (Jose and Lucas 1907; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 7/28). They are a xenophobic diatribe against German and French commercial and political influence in the Western Pacific. The articles were a direct and very unsubtle attack on the Colonial Office and the Western Pacific High Commissioner in Suva. They are significant because a second series of articles was published in the same paper in 1915 just after Australian troops had occupied German New Guinea. Again they condemned the actions of the British government in the Pacific, only this time the articles and the pamphlet, *British Mismanagement in the Pacific Islands No. 2*, highlighted Burns Philp's land acquisition problems in the Solomon Islands (Bennett 1987: 137). Lucas and Jose advocated for an advisory council to assist the High Commissioner with land issues and recommended that the High Commissioner have greater autonomy from the Colonial Office. Lucas and Jose were constant advocates for the Western Pacific High Commission to be relocated to Australia (Bennett 1987: 137–138). The arguments against the location of the High Commission in Fiji were the poor communications with Australia, the fact that the High Commissioner was unaware of public opinion in the Commonwealth and the problems associated with the Royal Navy Australia Station and Admiralty being located in Sydney (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 6 November 1908: 6).



Figure 39. 'Rubiana boys in typical dress' and 'Rubiana warrior carrying "lavi [lave]" [shield]'.

Source: AMS330/22 and AMS330/23, Capell Collection, The Australian Museum. Photographs by Walter H. Lucas circa. 1900.

Lucas continued with this line in an interview with the *Sydney Morning Herald* (31 December 1910: 11) after he had arrived back in Australia from another tour of inspection of the Solomon Islands Development Company plantations. His main complaint was that the laws and regulations applicable in the islands were made by bureaucrats from the Colonial Office in London rather than by local officials who, he said, had the real knowledge and understanding of the area. This was especially noticeable in protectorates that did not have the status of Crown Colonies—a direct comment on the Solomon Islands. Lucas was angry over the decision to allow for only two-year recruitment contracts for indentured labourers rather than the three-year contracts of earlier days. Two-year contracts raised the costs of recruiting and repatriation of workers and Lucas was of course on the side of the planters. The labour regulations of 1910 and the amendments of 1911 and 1912 allowed for workers to be employed for 50 hours a week. The working period, from Monday to Friday, consisted of 9-hour days. Saturday was a 5-hour working day. Sunday was a rest day (*The Solomons (Labour) Regulation of 1910*, King's Regulation no 3 of 1910 and amendments King's Regulation no 9 of 1911 and no 8 of 1912). These labour regulations gave the administration increased powers to scrutinise activities of recruiters and greater access to plantations. It could fine any planter found making false statements in any workers' books and the labour officials could order a worker to hospital, or in case of bad treatment, could remove or repatriate any worker back to their home community. Worker living quarters could be inspected and ration books issued to each worker, which specified the range of food provided at the plantation, could be examined. This ration included yams, sweet potato, taro, bananas, rice, coconuts, bread, sugar, biscuits, meat, fish, salt, soap, and, of course, tobacco. Any labourer who sold or bartered his rations could be fined 10 shillings. If this was designed to stop the regular trade in tobacco it is difficult to see how one labour inspector could supervise more than 2,000 labourers in scattered plantations across numerous islands.

The number of labourers employed on all plantations, by companies and at the missions, including the 81 people employed by the government, was listed in the statistical report of 1909. Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd employed 900, Burns, Philp & Co employed 120 and the Solomon Islands Development Company 160. W. H. Pope, who sold his plantation at Baunani, north of Onepusu, to the Malayta Company, employed 197 people and presumably they became workers on the mission company plantation (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1909: 25). In total, only 2,300 people were employed on plantations, trading stations and local vessels within the Protectorate. The legislation gave the government access to pay books. Lucas, like other planters and traders, and the policy makers in the Colonial Office, saw the Solomon Islanders first as workers who could be 'improved' by regular work. Industrial training was permitted providing it fostered discipline and encouraged productive labour 'to utilise

[Islanders] in the material development of the wealth of these tropical islands' (Bennett 2000a: 46 quoting Walter Henry Lucas 1917). By 1914, Woodford had the labour regulations that he had taken considerable effort to produce, but their effectiveness could only be measured in their application.

Following his return to Sydney, Lucas wrote to Woodford in a letter dated 14 January 1911 marked 'Strictly private' that explained his position regarding the 'yell about the establishment of the High Commissioner in the [Australian] Commonwealth' (Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 2/23 and 9/20). While Lucas wanted the office of the High Commissioner relocated to Australia, he still expected the Commissioner to be an 'Imperial Officer', in other words paid and supported from the Imperial rather than Australian treasury. Lucas believed that by relocating the High Commissioner to Australia he would somehow become immediately sympathetic to Australian interests. Newspaper articles pushed this line, no doubt with some influence from Lucas (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 January 1911). His move to separate the powers of the High Commissioner was in response to the 'indignation over [labour] regulations such as that re Solomon Labor being passed and becoming law without anybody having an opportunity to express an opinion'. Lucas was a man with a mission. His goal was the expansion of Anglo-Australian trade opportunities, and more specifically those of Burns, Philp & Co, in the Western Pacific. For Lucas the problem lay in the poor communications between Suva and the outlying colonies and protectorates. Everard im Thurn came under some criticism with the newspaper publicly stating: 'We have, for example, found Sir E. im Thurn rather dogmatic occasionally in the wrong direction'. The *Sydney Morning Herald* article of January 1911 reported that im Thurn's retirement would prove to be an excellent opportunity for an improvement in the relationship between Suva and Australia. As one would expect, the proposal for the separation of the powers was quickly rejected by the British government.

Lucas had a long history of conflict with German traders. He was supercargo on the *Titus* when he came into conflict with Norddeutscher-Lloyd Co over contracts for shipping that led to the exclusion of Burns Philp in German New Guinea. He was an influential man. He led a delegation of Federal members of Parliament on an inspection tour of Papua in 1911 (National Library of Australia PIC Album 783 and 782). 19 members of Parliament and their entourage visited Port Moresby, Yule Island, Samarai and Woodlark Island on the Burns Philp steamer *Matunga* (*The Brisbane Courier* 3 June 1911:4, 5 June 1911: 7). The company's collaboration in this exercise was of course organised by Lucas (National Archives of Australia A1, 1911/16361, 1911/3212, 1911/3213). The tour of inspection came at a time when there had been much speculation in plantation land in Papua following the passing of the Papuan Land Ordinance of 1906 and the amendments in 1908 that were part of Hubert Murray's scheme

to build a profitable plantation economy in Papua. There was an initial rush to acquire land on 99-year leases with a right of renewal. However by the end of 1909 the vast majority of these leases were unoccupied (Mair 1970: 30, Lett 1944: 112, *The Advertiser* [Adelaide] 27 February 1911: 10). Despite the obvious lack of promise, the delegation enthusiastically reported through the newspapers that Papua was the healthiest tropical country anywhere in the world: 'The only trouble is malarial fever, and that is not so bad ... Most people get it, but it is only like getting a touch of influenza' (*The Advertiser* [Adelaide] 18 July 1911: 10). Lucas also advanced this argument to James Burns in his report of September 1910 when he wrote that the Solomons had a 'less trying climate, better supply of labour, freehold titles to land and Imperial Control' (AU NBAC N115/195). According to one a member of the delegation Papua was the 'coming country' where '[t]he soil is magnificent ... Native labour is so cheap that whites do not have to do any really hard work' (*The Advertiser* [Adelaide] 18 July 1911: 10). In fact the real productive plantation land was in the hands of the Germans to the north and Lucas kept his eye on that prize for many years. His chance was not long in coming.

Following the occupation of the German territory by Australian troops in 1914, Lucas, Atlee Hunt, now Permanent Secretary for the Commonwealth Department of Home and Territories, and Judge Hubert Murray of Papua were appointed to a three member Royal Commission on late German New Guinea. This commenced in 1919. Hunt and Lucas produced a majority report in 1920 that was not supported by Murray, the chairman (Bassett 1969: 15fn). Lucas was then appointed Technical Adviser for New Guinea and Chairman of the Expropriation Board responsible for the liquidation of all German financial interests in New Guinea. This was a fine example of greed and corruption on a large-scale. In fact, the whole occupation of German New Guinea was a clever business move by the astute and aggressive Lucas to benefit Burns Philp (Ohff 2008: 5). The expropriation of German property between 1920 and 1927 was entangled in appeals, alleged labour problems, incorrect land registrations and surveys as well as problems with the settlement of outstanding villager rights and nationality rights (Australia. Custodian of Expropriated Property 1925; Cahill 1997: 13). By using 'dummies' financed by the large trading companies both Burns Philp and Carpenters were able to consolidate their position as the principal plantation and trading companies in New Guinea. Both Lucas, whom Cahill (1997: 27) called a 'xenophobic nonentity', and Jose, a trenchant advocate of the Australian point-of-view, believed in the Imperialist philosophies of Joseph Chamberlain, in the White Australia Policy, and in special commercial advantages for Australian interests in the Western Pacific.

The young Australian traveller, Marnie Bassett, in letters from New Guinea written in 1921, described Lucas in almost libellous terms. She wrote home to

her parents that ‘Rabaul gossip from the inside [is]—chiefly about Mr Lucas of the Expropriation Board, whom they all hate and are ashamed of’ (Bassett 1969: 15). Later Bassett and her companion sailed with Lucas on the steamer *Siar*, the former steamer of the *Neu-Guinea Compagnie* confiscated in 1914, and she found him to be ‘one of those civilian fire-eaters who is plainly out for revenge, and he is seemingly a most objectionable type of man’ (Bassett 1969: 38). She found him to be a terrifying person: ‘I have never met a more revolting man—His personal and his business reputation are both said to be bad and there isn’t a soul that doesn’t hate him; and here he is, the biggest man in the territory, next to the Administrator’ (Bassett 1969: 57). Lucas may have been objectionable to Bassett, and his business dealings questionable, but he was a prime example of the aggressive commercial entrepreneur with excellent political connections who used access to the newspapers to promote his opinions.

Promotional publications

In 1911 the first of two handbooks of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate was published. The reference book contained a brief description of the early European discoveries of the islands, the administrative structure, the climate, fauna and flora, and some brief details of agricultural potential. While the white population was given as 443, obviously counted, the local population estimate remained at 150,000, obviously uncounted (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1911). This figure would not be qualified until the first census in 1931. The high estimated figure only added to the assumption that the Solomon Islanders were a dying race. Even John Macmillan Brown, the New Zealand scholar and academic who wrote a number of papers on Polynesian and Māori culture, considered the Solomon Islanders a dying race and stated to the press: ‘It is not European diseases that are threatening their existence. It is luxury and idleness’. Macmillan Brown, returning from a long tour of the islands, anticipated the islanders would ‘vanish within fifty years’ (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 12 August 1911: 5). He also went on to say ‘copra has so risen in price that their coconuts and coconut lands have made them primitive millionaires’. Such beliefs were common at that time.

In fact the expansion of plantation land was slow. Of the 9,500,000 acres of total land area, of which only a fraction consisted of potential plantation land, 164,640 acres had been purchased freehold from islanders and 228,000 acres were held under Certificates of Occupation. Only 18,000 acres had been planted out (British Solomon Islands Protectorate 1911: 42). In the Solomon Islands, three plantation companies dominated: Lever’s Pacific Plantations Ltd, Solomon Islands Development Company, a subsidiary of Burns, Philp & Co, and the Malayta Company. Of the more than 400,000 acres in the Solomon Islands

alienated by 1913, 231,000 acres would be held by Lever's Pacific Plantations Ltd, 48,000 by Solomon Islands Development Company and 9,000 acres by the Malayta Company (Allan 1957: 38–39; Heath 1974a: 82). The figure of 400,000 acres, imprecise and unreliable as it may have been, was virtually the extent of European land alienation in the islands (Heath 1979: 112, 119). To further encourage would-be planters, other guides to owning and managing copra plantations were well promoted. One such self-help manual was the famous *Coconuts: The consols of the East* which covered all topics thought to be of benefit to newcomers. It was given an encouraging foreword by none other than Sir William Lever (Smith and Pape 1917). It was only after Lever's Pacific Plantations commenced large-scale copra production that the British Solomon Islands Protectorate's finances turned from deficit to surplus. The reason for the surplus was that the debit in relation to the DHPG concessions had been paid out. It was paid out in full on the tenth year as required.

Spreading the administrative net

In Tulagi, the need for a government vessel for police work and transport was a constant concern for Woodford. The first government ketch, *Lahloo*, a 33-ton ketch purchased in 1899 for £1,435 was used extensively in suppressing head hunting in the New Georgia group. The boat, built in Launceston, Tasmania, was purchased from E. L. McCaughan in Williamstown in Melbourne with the trader G. J. Waterhouse negotiating the sale for the administration (WPHC 4/IV 205/1898; *The Launceston Examiner* 6 September 1899: 4). General complaints were that the vessel was often becalmed in the narrow channels between the islands and could not respond quickly to policing requests. When Woodford finally got his longed for steamer, the *Belama*, this made holes in the 1908–1909 budget. The first *Belama*, a 100-ton steamer, built in Sydney by the Einarsen Bros of Balmain was designed specifically to be a steam yacht that could be used for rapid response in policing work (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 8 July 1908: 9). The name *Belama*—frigate bird—is not without significance. Woodford photographed a man with a frigate bird tattoo on his chest during his time in Aola. The frigate bird was carved into canoes and other decorations in the New Georgia area. It appears in stories, legends and songs across the Solomon Islands for it gathers above the sea when bonito are in a feeding frenzy on small baitfish. The sight of the frigate bird is important in all coastal islander cultures. At the same time Mahaffy, now based in Suva, purchased steamers for use by the British colonial administrations in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and in the New Hebrides (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 16 November 1908: 6, 21 December 1908: 8; Woodford papers PMB 1290 Item 8/1). The transition from sail to steam was considered important for all government work across the Western Pacific

territories. One of the first uses of the *Belama* was a policing campaign when it was sent to assist in the capture of Zito on Vella Lavella (*The Register* [Adelaide] 5 January 1910: 8). The *Lahloo* was wrecked in 1909 (see *The Queenslander* 1 October 1910: 7 and 22 for a photograph of the *Lahloo*). In February 1911 the first *Belama* was also wrecked when it struck an uncharted reef off Isabel (see *The Queenslander* 17 September 1910: 24 for a photograph of the *Belama*). As a result of the loss of the steamer the Protectorate was financially constrained. The boat was uninsured and had cost £7,000 to buy (Woodford papers PMB 1381/004 Letter to James Edge-Partington 8 April 1911). Woodford was left without any patrol vessel for some time.

Woodford purchased a new vessel, presumably using another Imperial grant. The second *Belama*, formerly the river steamer *Awittaka* from Hobart was built by Purdon and Featherstone Pty Ltd. Although popular with Tasmanian locals it was considered too expensive for use in the Derwent River (*The Examiner* [Launceston] 7 August 1911: 4). Renamed the *Belama*, it arrived at Tulagi in August 1911 (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 11 October 1911: 16). A steamer with 60 tons carrying capacity, it had a larger carrying capacity than the *Lahloo* but was smaller than the first *Belama*. The boat was 125 feet in length, with a beam of 22 feet and was capable of 13 knots per hour. It required a crew of 22 men apart from a captain, cook and chief engineer. 12 men were employed as firemen/stokers in the engine room, eight as general sailors and two as assistants to the Chinese cook (*The Brisbane Courier* 28 December 1912: 4). It also required 15 tons of coal. All this crew, and the need for maintenance and repairs as well as large amounts of coal, made the vessel effective in patrolling but a financial liability for a small colony. It was expensive to operate. Annual reports show it cost the administration £2,936 in 1910–1911, £3,596 in 1911–1912 and £4,339 in 1912–1913. This was double the annual public works expenditure and nearly three times that of district administration for 1912–1913. The second *Belama* served for ten years until it too was wrecked off Isabel in 1921 (*The Brisbane Courier* 25 July 1921: 6).

In the meantime, a new government station was opened at Auki when a site near the Quaibala River at Rarasu was purchased in October 1909 for £10 (BSIP 14/4). Thomas Edge-Partington was sent there to establish the patrol station and to recruit and train police. Edge-Partington was sent to Malaita partly as punishment for keeping a Simboese mistress while stationed in Gizo. He formally apologised to the administration and to the Colonial Office. Officially reprimanded by London he was recommended to get married as soon as possible (Edge-Partington to Barnett 20 September 1909 and im Thurn to Colonial Office 16 November 1909 CO 225 87 170; Mahaffy to High Commissioner 22 December 1908 and Woodford to Major 30 September 1910 WPHC 4/IV 836/1908). It was fortunate that his family had influence. ‘Concubinage’ with local women

in the British colonial service was a dismissible offence. Edge-Partington's correspondence with Woodford during the foundation years of the police service in Malaita have fortunately survived as have the daily diaries of the station (BSIP 14/14/1–14/10 and BSIP 15/VIII 135/1911–139/1915). The daily life of an isolated District Magistrate at Auki was not comfortable—even replacing broken cane chairs required formal approval (BSIP 14/8). On Malaita other officials found local people's opinion to be that 'government is an institution to keep clear of' and Edge-Partington found people fled at the sight of him or the sight of his whaleboat coming along the coast. It would have been disheartening at times. As the jail on Tulagi was only a small lockup at this time, the Vella Lavella men implicated in the Zito escapades were sent to Auki to work as labourers. They were warned that if they escaped into the bush the Malaitans would kill them (BSIP 14/4).

Edge-Partington remained at Auki until January 1915 when he resigned from the service after his requests for transfer to East Africa were refused and he came into conflict with Frank Barnett, who replaced Woodford in 1914 (BSIP 14/9). He found police work on Malaita to be a 'special and dangerous service' and complained that the Fijian police officer sent to train constables was 'quite useless'. Edge-Partington recruited his police from the New Georgia area but this too had problems. He found them disrespectful and often rude (BSIP 14/5 and 14/42). No doubt they too knew that he had kept a mistress on Gizo, that he had been transferred as punishment, and treated him, a very young man, accordingly. Life for Europeans in tropical Pacific colonies was characterised by what was considered sound medical evidence proving the 'popular representations of white man's inevitable slide into a state of drunkenness and degeneracy precipitated by a life of idleness, boredom and too intimate contact with natives' (O'Brien 2009: 103). Tropical climates were thought to bring about indolence and excess, they stimulated the appetite for over-indulgence and alcoholism and led to physiological effects that caused sexual excess (Eves 2005: 308). A 'moral economy of climate' that proscribed the proper mode of living in the tropics meant that women and children were discouraged from settlement (Eves 2005: 320–321). Colonial cultures were not direct copies of European society translated to the tropics but 'homespun' creations with their own social and moral codes. The quality and intensity of the racial divide varied enormously according to the colonial context, the location and the historical moment. But colonial racism and class structures were measures of how people classified themselves. Contact with poor or impoverished whites, beachcombers or drifters was seen to be as socially stigmatising as an 'improper' contact with local people (Stoler 1989).

With the demand for local plantation labour increasing, police work on a dangerous island like Malaita was unattractive, and while Malaitan men made

good police, if they served elsewhere, employing them to pacify their home island was fraught with a 'grave risk of disaster' (Boutilier 1983: 57–58 quoting from WPHC 4/IV 831/1908 and 2161/1911). When the South Seas Evangelical Mission missionary Frederick Daniels was murdered at Ngongosila, a small island off the east Kwara'ae coast, the *Belama* was sent there on police action. The Gua'ala cultural group who owned the island maintained trading links along much of the east coast and this made Ngongosila a useful base for a mission station (Moore 2010: 37). Daniels was killed while conducting an evening service. It was ostensibly in retaliation for the death of a labourer on plantation service but Rev Arthur Hopkins of the Melanesian Mission and Edge-Partington found that Daniels had given protection to a man who had seduced the daughter of a local Big-man. Daniels was murdered for being complicit in breaking strict Malaitan sexual codes (Hilliard 1969: 54; Bennett 1987: 109). Barnett was acting Resident Commissioner at the time and wrote on 24 June 1911 to Edge-Partington that little could be done for missionaries like Daniels who 'often stupidly persist in placing themselves in the front rank of danger' in their communities (BSIP 14/6). Barnett also warned of criticism from Florence Young but Edge-Partington, whose relationship with Barnett became increasingly acrimonious, considered her to be always 'sensible and nice' (BSIP 14/40). But the South Seas Evangelical Mission did request government intervention this time and so the HMS *Torch*, which was taking the High Commissioner Sir Francis May on an inspection tour, launched a punitive expedition against Uru Island. Here the village was burnt and all the fishing nets and pigs were confiscated (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 11 December 1911: 9). Following this expedition the Judicial Commissioner Sir Charles Major ruled that no punitive expedition could take place without official sanction of the High Commissioner. A second ruling was that the Resident Commissioner in Tulagi could pass the death sentence on a murderer but could not carry out punishment. It had to be done in Suva (BSIP 14/6 and 14/7). While the news of the punitive expedition silenced antagonism against the government in other parts of Malaita, in Ngongosila the mission suffered a serious setback. It was not reopened until 1923 and the effects were longstanding. Uru was a centre of Kwaio land and they had built up a fierce reputation for their attacks on recruiting boats. If the Kwaio could be 'humbled by the government then surely this was a force to be reckoned with' (Bennett 1987: 111). Retribution for the murders of Europeans was quick. At first it looked as if people on Malaita were prepared to accept British law and order but the ripple effect was wide. The Kwaio would not be humbled. They would seek revenge for many grievances in the murder of District Officer, William Bell, in October 1927.

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