THE LIVES AND TIMES OF RESIDENT TRADERS IN TUVALU: AN EXERCISE IN HISTORY FROM BELOW

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Seaborne trade in the Pacific last century depended on shipping, capital, connections, and markets. So crucial were these impersonal forces that they encourage an economic determinism by diverting attention from the human dimension of the business. In particular it is easy to overlook those who assumed the roles, so to speak, of hewers of wood and drawers of water. Seaborne trade, in short, was more than a matter of "prices, percentages, competitors and navigation" (Firth 1978: 130); it was equally a matter of deckhands afloat, copra cutters ashore, and resident traders scattered throughout the archipelagoes. To put it another way, the interarchipelago trade in copra, bêche-de-mer, and pearlshell could never have been an economic proposition unless the trading vessels involved had been manned by "native" crews who were cheap to maintain and feed; or had not thousands of Islanders throughout the Pacific cut the copra that those vessels carried away to distant markets. Nor could the copra trade have been conducted in the absence of the underrated yet ubiquitous European resident trader, sometimes trading on his own account but more commonly in company employment, for whom the Pacific became "home."

This breed of men has been pushed to the farthest margins of Pacific historiography. They seldom penned their memoirs[1] and have never received preferential treatment from historians. Furthermore, their marginal *status* within the European trading system has obscured, then

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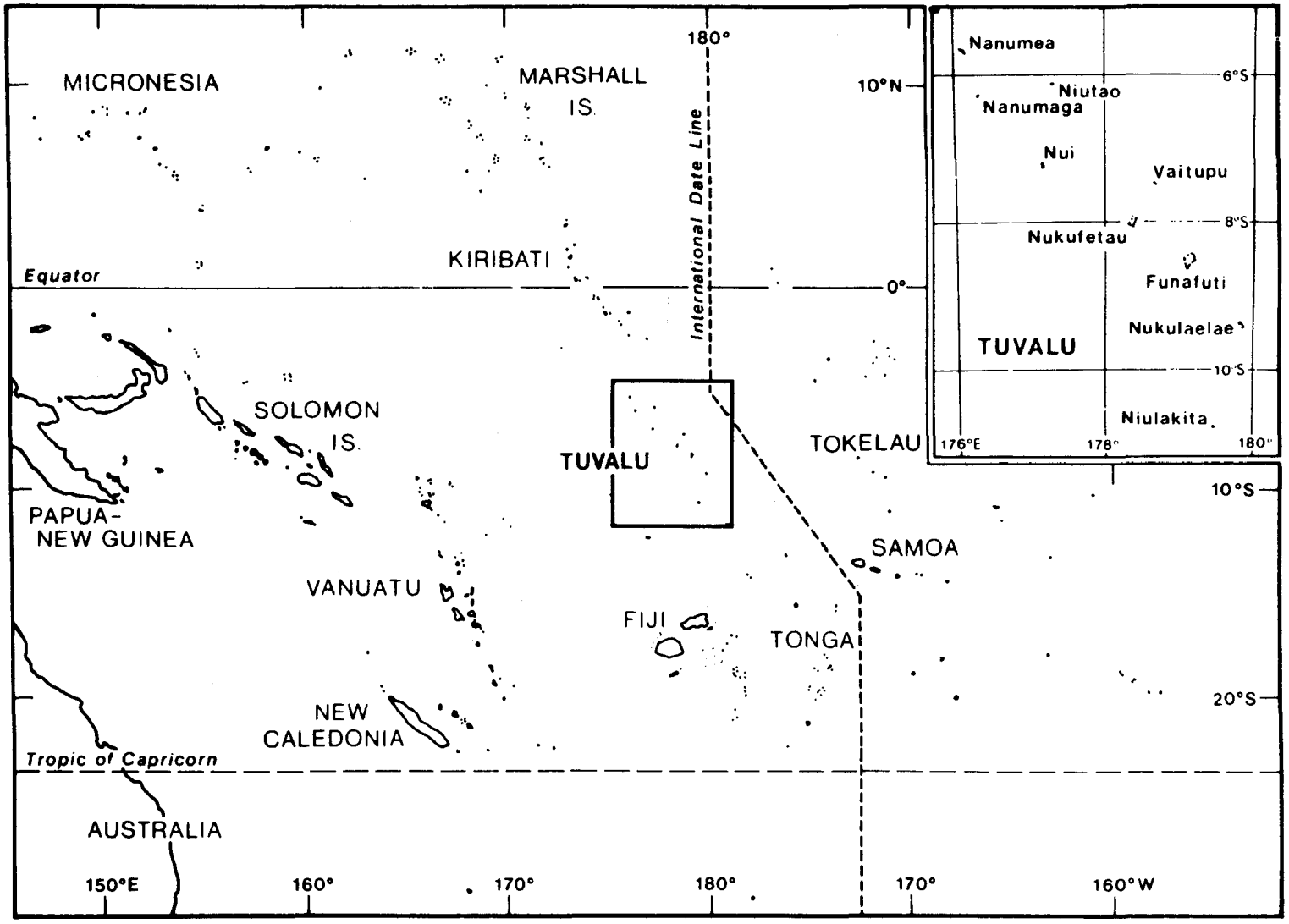

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and now, their crucial *role* within it. While other aspects of trading have become better understood in recent years, our knowledge of the resident outstation traders remains much as it was two decades ago when Harry Maude and Alastair Couper first drew attention to them (Maude 1968:270-273; Couper 1967). The only significant advance has come from Francis Hezel, who gives resident traders prominence in his history of the precolonial Caroline and Marshall Islands (Hezel 1983). Hezel, however, views the typical trader's life more optimistically than I am able. Given these circumstances, a deeper study on this social group needs little justification; what follows is a move in that direction. Rather than being a series of individual biographies, this paper brings together the fragmentary evidence in an attempt to construct a social profile, or group biography, of those traders who took up residence in the tiny island world of Tuvalu.[2]

Wider Background

The nine coral atolls and reef islands of the Tuvalu group have always been peripheral to European interests. Small in size and modest in resources, they offered no scope for large-scale European settlement or plantation economies.[3] Trading contacts between Tuvaluans and Europeans initially occurred in 1821 when Captain George Barrett of the *Independence II,* the first whaling ship to enter Tuvaluan waters, sent parties ashore at Nukulaelae to obtain provisions for sick members of his crew (Stackpole 1953:279-280). Over the next forty years the most common sail on the horizon was that of the broad-beamed whaler, overwhelmingly from Massachusetts. Although Tuvalu was located on the western edge of the On-the-Line whaling ground, whaling captains tended to avoid this badly charted, low-lying archipelago where the winds and currents were tricky, where local resources offered little scope for repairs and reprovisioning, and where whales were not particularly abundant. Tuvalu, in other words, was more a thoroughfare than a whalers' resort, with many captains passing through and avoiding all chances of contacts with shore. Instead, Tuvaluans took the initiative, coming out in their canoes to exchange coconuts and mats for metal fishhooks, knives, glass bottles, and beads. Despite the intermittent nature of these encounters, trading between Europeans and Tuvaluans, as far as the latter were concerned, had begun in earnest, thus paving the way for less transient types of commercial contacts.

By the 1860s the whalers' day in Tuvalu was all but over. The depletion of sperm whales combined with developments in the United States

(civil war, gold rushes, and the substitution of whale products) resulted in whalers largely abandoning tropical latitudes. Their replacement was already on hand; during the previous decade the itinerant whaler had gradually been replaced by another breed of merchant--the seaborne trader.

The first "traders proper" to enter Tuvaluan waters were freelance skippers in search of speculative cargoes. An early example involved the California vessel *Rodolph* on a Pacific cruise to gather produce for the San Francisco market (Kemble 1966: 140-147). Trading contacts gradually became more durable with the entry of the Sydney firms of Robert Towns and Company, J. C. Malcolm and Company, and Macdonald, Smith and Company, who pioneered the coconut-oil trade in the group. Initially their involvement in coconut oil was of a speculative nature, with their vessels dealing directly with Islanders and gathering cargoes wherever they could on an ad hoc basis. But they operated on a far larger scale than the independent freelance skippers: Tuvalu formed only one small part of their overall operations. Towns, for example, regarded the group as no more than an offshoot of his activities in Kiribati which, in turn, were but a sideline to his involvement in sandalwood trading in Vanuatu. Periodically one of Towns' vessels was diverted from Vanuatu to pick up the coconut oil collected by his agents stationed in these remote archipelagoes (Maude 1968:263-267; Shineberg 1967: 108-l18). Malcolm too had been active in Vanuatu, but had terminated this interest in about 1860 and redirected the Pacific side of his affairs to coconut oil. His ships plied Rotuma, Kiribati, and Futuna as well as Tuvalu, and he established a head station at Rotuma and posted a resident agent at Maiana in northern Kiribati (Macdonald 1982:27; Maude 1981:81). Thus, from the onset Tuvalu was of little importance in trading company calculations and assumed significance only as part of an extended network of trading stations involving other archipelagoes as well.

In order for the Island trade to function on such a scale, the trading companies had to rationalize their procedures. This was accomplished in two stages. First, the itinerant trading contacts between ship and shore that characterized the whalers and earliest traders gave way to the establishment of the island base, such as Malcolm's at Rotuma, from which company ships could strike out for neighboring archipelagoes. From there it was a short step toward developing networks of outstations, each manned by a resident company agent (Couper 1967:51-52).

This became the organizational form for trading throughout the Pacific. It was a conscious response to economy and efficiency and was

geared to minimize the difficulties of conducting seaborne trade in an extremely dispersed geographic setting. Resident traders served to stimulate local production by being on hand to barter goods for oil, which they would store until it was collected by the company ship. They also made possible the optimum utilization of ships' time, which was crucial to the fortunes of trading companies. This was more efficient than itinerant trading for speculative cargoes, where the vessel would lie idly at each point of loading while the crew went ashore for a cargo, quite possibly offending local sensibilities in the process. Not only was a ship's time, in a sense, irreplaceable, but ships themselves were costly items of capital equipment that depreciated rapidly and operated at high cost. Hence the need for their continual utilization and, in consequence, the rationale for resident traders.

The Earliest Traders

The first resident traders in Tuvalu arrived sometime during the 1850s as agents of Robert Towns (Maude 1968:265n). They were followed by others, such as Jack O'Brien at Funafuti, Charlie Douglas at Niutao, Peter Laban at Nukulaelae, and, perhaps, the two unnamed white men who went out to greet the New Bedford whaler *Elizabeth* at Nui in 1861.[4] It is sometimes uncertain whether these individuals actually arrived as traders or whether they were deserters from whaling ships who sooner or later engaged as shore-based company agents or as independents gathering consignments of coconut oil for passing trading vessels. Jack O'Brien, reputedly the son of a New South Wales convict, and Charlie Douglas came to the Pacific as whalers, made the transition to beachcombing, and soon after turned to trade (Dana 1935:246-248; Restieaux MSa). Then there is the case of John Daly, one of Towns' trading captains, who was separated from his vessel by extraordinary misadventure at Niutao in 1868: when towing twelve empty hogsheads ashore he drifted over the horizon, unnoticed by his crew, and drifted to Nanumea. He was rescued eight months later by a passing vessel.[5] But whatever their reason for being in Tuvalu, resident Europeans who engaged in trade were advantaged by their linguistic monopoly: only a handful of Tuvaluans had ever enlisted on whaling vessels and few, if any, could speak English with sufficient fluency to act as middlemen in the passing trade in coconut oil (Munro 1985).

The remarkable feature of these earliest traders was not their commercial significance but their religious impact in that they paved the way for the missionaries who followed (Brady 1975:143n). Their

motives were varied. There were the self-styled missionary traders, men such as Tom Rose at Nukulaelae and Robert Waters at Nui, who actively proselytized. Rose held rudimentary services on Sundays in response to the peoples' desire to know more about Christianity (Mrs. Chalmers 1872:147-148). So did Waters, but with an eye to economic advantage: capitalizing on the temporal power that accompanied his assumed missionary role, he instituted a system of fines payable only in coconut oil (Murray 1876:391-392, 409-410). Other traders were openly contemptuous of the pagan system. Charlie Douglas at Niutao and another trader at Vaitupu, known in oral tradition as "Titi,"[6] set fire to all the religious structures (Alefaio 1979; Dana 1935:247-248). In dramatic fashion Jack O'Brien did the same at Funafuti, "not from any religious purpose, but because the ancient religion took up much of the time which he thought, rightly or wrongly, should be given to collecting copra [should be coconut oil] for him" (Sollas 1897:354-355). The fact that such actions failed to attract divine retribution was probably one factor in the eventual eclipse of the pagan religion. Even those traders who had no intention of eroding the foundations of the pagan religion usually had the effect of doing so (in the southern islands at least) for they came not as an isolated force but as part of an overall alien culture that the Tuvaluans perceived as being more powerful than their own. The Tuvaluans observed the worldly wealth, the impressive technology, and the literacy of these sporadic earliest Europeans, whether ashore or afloat; they could scarcely afford to ignore a god who so endowed his adherents.[7] Even such reprehensible actions as those of Tom Rose and Jack O'Brien in assisting the Peruvian slavers at Nukulaelae and Funafuti respectively in 1863 (Graeffe 1867:1162-63) had the unexpected short-term effect of strengthening the appeal of Christianity. The survivors turned to the powerful new religion to restructure their communities from the ruins of the immediate past (Maude 1981: 174-175).

By the mid-1860s most, perhaps all, the Tuvalu islands had played host to a resident trader. That decade was one of transition in the group. The trade in coconut oil was being phased out in preference for the more profitable copra. The London Missionary Society (LMS) also began stationing Samoan pastors throughout Tuvalu, and by degrees the group became a Protestant stronghold. Once established, the LMS entered the local trading relationship. Annual donations were solicited, thus diverting some of each island's resources away from the trader. At the same time, however, the LMS stimulated trade by creating a vigorous local demand for clothing, stationery, and building materials for churches. In this way the established two-way trading pattern between

traders and Tuvaluans was transformed into an interrelated three cornered relationship involving the LMS as well (Munro 1982:207-209, 220-229).

An additional change resulted from the "emergence of a new economic milieu in the archipelagoes" of the Pacific (Couper 1967:73), dominated by large, diversified, heavily capitalized companies quite different in character and objectives than their smaller rivals, whom they eclipsed, and better able to make money out of the dispersed island trade. In the forefront was the Hamburg firm of J. C. Godeffroy und Sohn, which exercised a near monopoly over copra trading in Tuvalu during the 1870s. The company placed traders on most islands of the group, including such individuals as Harry Nitz at Vaitupu and Martin Kleis at Nui. These men remained the rest of their lives on their respective islands, marrying into the community and raising large families. By the following decade, however, Godeffroys' successor, the Deutsche Handels-und Plantagen-Gesellschaft der Südsee-Inseln zu Hamburg (DHPG), encountered severe competition from H. M. Ruge and Company, another German firm, and from Henderson and Mcfarlane of Auckland. By this time the trader's house, store, and copra shed in Tuvalu were as common a sight as the church, the *maneapa* (public meetinghouse), and the adjacent village green.

Despite their diversity of social backgrounds, the overwhelming impression is that traders were a group of men, dissatisfied and often unsuccessful in other walks of life, who found a refuge on the margins of the Island trade. They were social casualties by and large. Most went into trading in the first place as a last resort after drifting in and out of various occupations--and sometimes in and out of trouble as well--in various parts of the world, ranging from goldmining in New Zealand, bushranging in Australia, fighting in a South American revolution, or service in the Hong Kong police force or the Royal Navy. Typically unmarried, but sometimes turning their backs on an unhappy marriage, they also leave the retrospective impression of weariness with the uncertainties of a wandering existence. In this gradual process of an unsettled disposition giving way to the desire for a more stable existence they drifted, often unexpectedly, into the Island trade, sometimes first as seamen but finally as company agents ashore. There is the suggestion too that one attraction of the trade was the absence of constant and direct supervision. Although more settled in their occupation than before, traders still tended to be men on the move, wearying of one island (sometimes driven away by the inhabitants) and moving on to the next with their dreams of sudden wealth receding ever further. Thus,

most of the copra traders who came to Tuvalu were already identities on other archipelagoes and known by name at least throughout the Island trade.

The number of traders in Tuvalu probably exceeded seventy. I have been able to document the presence of sixty-two individuals, but there would have been others, particularly during the period before 1865, who are not mentioned in the sources.[8] The number of traders fluctuated, with some islands receiving more than others. On the drier reef islands of Niutao and Nanumanga, whose commercial potential is meager even by Tuvalu standards, there was seldom more than a solitary trader, and indeed Nanumanga went for long periods without a trader at all. The atolls, by contrast, experienced almost continuous occupancy, often two or more traders at any given time, but there is no set pattern. The number of traders within the group also varied over time. At any given moment there could be as few as two or as many as fourteen, but usually there were between five and ten. The actual number reflected the overall activities of the trading companies involved. During the 1870s there was an annual average of eight traders; most were employed by Godeffroys, who dominated the commerce of the wider region. During the 1880s, with increasing competition from other firms, the figure rose to ten but dwindled during the following decade to an average of five as one company after another terminated its interest in Tuvalu. Other companies filled the void, but the number of traders in the group continued to decline because companies now preferred to deal directly with Tuvaluans; and by 1909 the remaining two Europeans in the group had long since abandoned their vocation to become "relics . . . of a vanished class" (Mahaffy 1909; see also Wallin 1910).

Relations with Other People

Traders and Tuvaluans

Whatever their initial diversity in social background, outlook, and temperament, traders in Tuvalu were soon forced into a common mold by the inescapable circumstances of their vocation, the atoll environment, and the people with whom they shared an island. At first sight it might appear that Tuvaluans were the arbiters of the trading relationship in that it revolved around their demand for trade goods and was dependent on the amount of copra they were prepared to produce in exchange. In point of fact the overall European trading system was not one in which Tuvaluans, or other Pacific Islanders, could participate

except at the bottom of a hierarchy of dependence. This limitation stemmed in part from cultural restraints imposed by kinship obligations, community solidarity, and ethics of reciprocity that run counter to profit making and economic individualism. These same social obligations mitigated against the success of indigenous commercial ventures based on the spirit of private enterprise. "In effect," as Couper explains, "a trading system based on cash tended to become inextricably entwined with another based on kinship" (1967:125). Tuvaluans, moreover, lacked the necessary capital and connections and faced the hostility of entrenched European interests whenever they chose to break into the new system of maritime commerce on its own terms. Thus, Tuvaluans and other Pacific Islanders were admitted only in a restricted fashion, providing they submitted to the trade's unilateral interests and pressures. They were the toilers--the copra cutters and deckhands--whose rewards were largely subject to external authorities and controls (see Couper 1968; Couper 1973).

Resident traders were the point of contact between trading companies and Tuvaluans, and the latter could exert telling pressure on the traders to get a better deal for themselves. The inherent conflict of interest between the two parties led to constant haggling over the price of goods and the value of copra. Boycotting the resident traders was a common enough occurrence on any given island as a means to raise the buying price of copra. Such embargoes on trade were invariably of short duration since the Tuvaluans in the meanwhile deprived themselves of their only access to clothing, stationery, and other needed items from the trader's store, as well as cash for their missionary contributions. Traders knew this and were wont to hit back by imposing trade embargoes of their own. Thus the missionary Nisbet discovered during the LMS's annual visit of inspection in 1875 that "The people [of Vaitupu] had fallen far short of their usual liberality in regard to the teacher's salary. He accounted for this by the fact that the stores had been closed, as the traders refused to comply with the demand of the people for an increase in the price of dried nuts" (Nisbet 1875:7-8).

Another such incident occurred at Nanumanga five years later when Louis Becke closed his store following a dispute with a high-ranking Nanumangan. Being the only trader on the island Becke was in a strong position to set his own terms and conditions. It was not a situation where Islanders could play off rival traders against one another: all they could do in the circumstances was to wait for trading vessels to call and conduct business with them. But no vessels came and finally the Nanumangans were reduced to pleading with Becke to resume normal trad-

ing operations--or such at least is Becke's version of events (Becke 1880). Disagreements over the quality or suitability of the nuts could also force trade to a standstill. When the traders at Niutao refused to purchase green nuts, which are useless for copra, the *kaupule* (council of elders) was "much aggrieved" and banned trade altogether on the grounds that the traders were acting "arbitrarily and unfairly" (Maxwell 1881:5-6).

Two separate issues were involved in the imposition of trade embargoes by Tuvaluans. They were used both as a device to strengthen their commercial bargaining power and as a disciplinary measure against infractions of the local code. Captain Maxwell, who patched up several such disagreements during the cruise of HMS *Emerald* through Tuvalu in 1881, remarked that "the taboo is their only defence against any dishonest trader, and their only means of enforcing good behaviour upon people towards whom they are not permitted to use force. Still there is no doubt that it may be, and sometimes is arbitrarily and vexatiously applied" (Maxwell 1881:5). Jack O'Brien's confrontations with the *kaupule* at Niutao, where he had gone to trade during the 1880s provides a case in point. He may well have been the sort of Irishman who felt "a sort of divine commission to fight against Kings and other rulers," but the *kaupule* were also dispensing justice rather too partially and "making laws having special reference to the poor Irishman whose irascible temper seems to have annoyed them" (Marriott 1883:17; Newell 1885:21).

In other cases too the rights and wrongs of the matter were ill defined. When Thompson of Nui was fined for squabbling with his wife, he paid the fine but refused to appear before the chiefs for a mandatory scolding and instead remained inside his house behind locked doors. After the third summons the door was broken down, Thompson dragged bodily to the council house, and his residence robbed during his absence. Maxwell arbitrated and was told by another trader on the island that "the same thing would have been done to any native on the island; that the Kaipuli [sic] always enforced obedience to their demands according to the law; that Mr. Thompson was made aware of their laws when he first came . . ." (Maxwell 1881:3). In the end Thompson was quite amenable to reason: he wanted nothing more said about the stolen sixteen dollars, only an apology for being manhandled. Maxwell then suggested repayment of the stolen money and that Thompson's door be repaired, and finally Thompson and the "King" shook hands expressing their hope to "be better friends in future" (Maxwell 1881:4).

The relationship between traders and local leaders embraced a range of situations and was fraught with tension. Even when disagreement with a trader was at an interpersonal or an interfamily level, it would ultimately have had to be resolved by the local leadership, since a trader's activities involved the island at large. Because each party was dependent on the other, it was mutually inconvenient for trading operations to be suspended indefinitely, and disagreements were nearly always resolved sooner or later. In late 1885, for example, the council of Nanumea told George Winchcombe and Frank Jackson to leave the atoll the next time their firms' vessels called on the grounds that the two traders were "not good for the people." Jackson departed at the first opportunity, but Winchcombe stayed on and nothing more was said because, on sober reflection, the Nanumeans realized that they could ill afford to be without a trader on the island (Winchcombe 1881-1887:2).

Traders and Missionaries

Several other factors intervened to varying degrees to complicate traders' daily lives. The Samoan pastors of the LMS frequently deployed their considerable local influence to damage the interests of a trader they happened to dislike, to the extent sometimes of instigating embargoes against that trader. The visiting European missionaries received numerous complaints from traders that the pastors were interfering in trade or acting despotically, but almost invariably these charges were dismissed as being "trivial,""unfounded," or springing from jealousy of the pastors' local influence (Powell 1871:20; Davies 1880:6-7; Phillips 1884:17; Winchcombe 1881-1887:31). Not prepared to be dictated to and loath to divert their busy schedules for the sake of aggrieved traders, the visiting missionaries were also concerned to uphold the authority and standing of their outstation pastors. The European missionaries' also tended to regard traders as "trashy whites" of godless deportment (although occasional friendships or regard for individual traders were also sometimes the case), and this likewise served to prejudice the reception of even genuine complaints. Accordingly, the visiting LMS missionaries perceived themselves not as the protectors of traders but quite the reverse: "The 'John Williams' has been a grand check on the doings of unscrupulous Traders," wrote one (Wilson 1886:14), while another reported that "as in other voyages so also in this one the evil example and influence of the traders scattered throughout these islands gives the Deputation no small amount of trouble" (Newel 1885:46). Traders' experience of Samoan pastor and European missionary alike largely

explains why they were anti-missionary rather than irreligious as such, and Louis Becke had a point when he said that some traders were indeed "very religious men, although they don't show it" (Becke 1905:149).

Some traders, however, did show their religious feeling but in their own way. Alfred Restieaux and George Westbrook on Funafuti so thoroughly detested the island's dictatorial pastor that they refused to attend his church services and held their own private devotions on Sundays (Phillips 1881:8). Restieaux even refused to have the pastor baptize his children; he waited instead for the arrival of a warship and asked its chaplain to perform the ceremony (Maxwell 1881:2; Bridge 1883:2). Some other traders were more forthright in their efforts to undermine the pastor's standing. In 1890 Edmund Duffy arrived at Nanumea from the Fakaofo in Tokelau, where he had been at the center of a schism in the local church (Claxton 1889:9). At Nanumea he showed himself to be public spirited and directed the building of the road, which to this day runs on the ocean side of the main village (A. Chambers 1984:87-88). He also sided with the high chief against the pastor in a dispute over each other's sphere of authority, and when the pastor threatened and belittled the chief, Duffy translated a letter of complaint from the chief to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific.[9]

Rarely did friendships develop between resident traders and the Samoan pastors of the LMS. Louis Becke, who traded at Nanumanga in the early 1880s, was later to idolize pastor Ioane, but on the grounds that he was different from the common run of pastors. Pearson (1970:240-241) has termed this attitude a "qualified racism" or the "cult of the exceptional Polynesian." Becke criticized the harsh and petty theocracies over which Samoan pastors typically presided, and then went on to say:

> But on this particular little island we had for our resident missionary a young stalwart Samoan, who did not forbid his flock to dance and sing, nor prohibit the young girls from wearing flowers in their dark locks. And he himself was a mighty fisherman and a great diver and swimmer, and smoked his pipe and laughed and sang with the people out of the fulness of his heart when they were merry, and prayed for and consoled them in their sorrow. So we all loved Ioane, the teacher, and Eline, his pretty young wife, and his two jolly little muddy brown infants; for there was no other native missionary like him in the wide Pacific. (Becke 1897:148-149)

Otherwise Becke so detested men of the cloth that he left Tuvalu in 1881 for the Carolines, which were "free from that curse of the islands the missionary element" (Becke 1880).

Most traders managed to maintain a reasonably polite relationship with visiting European missionaries, if only because they dealt with them so infrequently. The personalities of individual traders could also have a bearing on the outcome. Harry Nitz, the long-serving Godeffroy/DHPG trader on Vaitupu, helped in the construction of the island's new church, which he then regularly attended in a manner befitting "a well conducted man" (Powell 1871:18; Davies 1873:4). Others, however, such as George Winchcombe, only served to confirm the missionary stereotype of the dissolute, worthless trader. As Louis Becke wrote of him:

> four years on Niutao and cannot yet talk the language in fact had to interpret for him. such a man to talk, my ears are actually tingling now, I don't know how much more I would have suffered if it had not been for a case of gin I produced and by liquoring him up freely I got a little respite. he is a fair sample of too many island traders fond of liquor and never happy without some grievance against the natives, these are the men that give the missionaries such a pull over all traders-- (Becke 1880)

The irony is that Winchcombe "professed to be a cut above the ordinary trader." His airs and graces, his ostentatious use of long words, and an extreme possessiveness toward his wife resulted in Winchcombe being the butt of many unkind remarks (Dana 1935:254-256). At the same time he proved to be a sore trial to all he encountered. Fellow traders could not abide his selfishness: he was never prepared to reciprocate past kindnesses (Restieaux MSc). Nor did the chiefs on the various islands where he traded appreciate his litigious nature: he constantly appealed for their arbitration in his quarrels and then dissented from decisions that did not go his way. It is little wonder when he left Nukufetau that the people had no wish to accept another trader in their midst (Rooke 1886: 10).

Traders versus Traders

As well as being at odds with representatives of the LMS, traders also had problems with each other and the companies to whom they were tied. Traders on the same island often provided each other with com-

panionship, even if in different circumstances those men may not have been associates. But they were also certain to provide one another with competition and this could strain a friendship or even prevent one from developing, especially in the 1880s when falling world copra prices and increasing competition left many traders heavily in debt to their companies. This competitive situation could result in price wars breaking out, and relations between traders on the same island then hit a very sour note. When Louis Becke arrived for a brief stay at Nukufetau in 1881, the only other trader on the atoll was George Winchcombe, whom he already disliked. Becke promptly raised the buying price of copra and lowered the selling price of his trade goods to the native producers, thus bringing Winchcombe's business to a halt (Maxwell 1881:3).

The trading companies, moreover, did not always act in strict fairness toward their outstation traders, whom they considered to be insufficiently honest, industrious, or sober. Feeling the pinch of hard times, Henderson and Macfarlane started charging their traders for shrinkage and debiting their accounts if, in response to competition, they raised the purchasing price of copra above a stipulated amount. (Restieaux MSb: 12). In 1882 and 1883 this same firm was experiencing difficulty in keeping its far-flung and probably overextended trading network serviced, with the result that many of its traders, including those in Tuvalu, became

> completely destitute for stores, and even the necessaries of life, the vessels that should have supplied them being many months overdue. . . . One result of their being left in this distress is sometimes, that they are obliged to part with the produce they have collected for their own firm, in order to procure the necessary supplies, thereby gaining a character for fraudulent practices which is not always deserved. (Le Hunte 1883: 10-11)

Yet "bondage" to an established trading company was, on the whole, a more secure arrangement than the earlier ad hoc procedure of collecting produce for free-lance trading-captains who might go out of business the next day and whose treatment often left much to be desired. A case in point is the treatment meted out to Winchcombe by the notorious Bully Hayes. Hayes landed Winchcombe at Nukufetau in 1872 but without provisions or suitable trade. Returning four months later Hayes invited Winchcombe and his Tuvaluan wife on board his ship, where he put a bottle of gin at the trader's disposal. The day ended with the hopelessly drunk Winchcombe being tarred by the crew while Hayes was in his cabin with Winchcombe's wife where he "downed her on the sofa &

so forth"; finally, the two were dumped ashore and abandoned (Restieaux MSc:4-5, 7-10).

Traders and Naval Captains

In 1872, HMS *Basilisk* (Captain John Moresby) passed through Tuvalu and called at most islands. At Niutao Moresby warned that warship action would result "should they ever be unfriendly to white people." Two days later at Nanumea he heard that the local trader had been threatened, so a couple of shells were fired into the bush as a warning (K. Chambers 1984:110-111; Moresby 1876:79-80). Moresby's action was exceptional; never again did a British warship in Tuvalu waters fire a shot in anger. Traders eventually came to realize that they could not depend on naval protection. The first to do so was W. B. Thompson, who was fined and boycotted, and even occasionally assaulted, by the people of Funafuti during the mid-1870s for arrogantly persisting with the notion that his Funafutian wife's family lands should be made over to him. Thompson regarded the matter as a test case and called for "powerful and vigorous action" to demonstrate once and for all that Islanders could not "with impunity insult, rob and committ [sic] Brutal Outrage upon a British subject."[10]

Although he was largely the maker of his own misfortunes, Thompson did have some valid complaints, though these were pointedly ignored by officers of both the Royal Navy Australian Station and the Western Pacific High Commission. Thompson's position as trader on Funafuti thus became quite untenable, and he had no option but to leave the atoll. Finally he took passage in 1878 on Henderson and Macfarlane's schooner *Belle Brandon* commanded by Captain Frederick Ohlsen. It so happened that Ohlsen was embroiled in a separate trading dispute at Vaitupu where he had been menaced by a group of armed Islanders acting under instructions from the local Samoan pastor. When they eventually reached Fiji, Ohlsen and Thompson took their complaints to the acting High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, who dismissed them out of hand in abusive letters of reply.[11]

His verdict was predictable. The acting high commissioner was expressing what any other British colonial official would have said in the circumstances, if more vehemently. Similar sentiments were penned by a touring judicial magistrate who had

> not the least doubt in my mind that . . . if Englishmen choose to settle in these spots--take native wives,--and identify themselves with the natives, they must be satisfied to accommodate

> themselves to the rules and customs of the country, and not call for the interference of the captain of a man-of-war because they may be inconvenienced either in business or private matters by laws of general application to the whole people. . . . nothing to my mind can be worse than . . . sending Queen's ships to take up traders' squabbles, impose fines on whole communities, and, if necessary, enforce their payment by actual force, because--(in nineteen cases out of twenty)--some seedy loafer has, through his own acts, incurred the hatred of the islanders on whom he has been thrust, and who in enmity annoy him in order to drive him away. (Le Hunte n.d. : 14)

In short, British official attitudes were little different from those of the LMS missionaries in that they disliked traders in general and resented being dictated to by them. Also at issue was the humanitarian principle that Islanders' rights were to be protected and upheld, and the practical consideration that imperial resources in the Western Pacific were patently insufficient to deal with more pressing matters, such as the regulation of the labor trade in Melanesia, without a warship being diverted every time a "trader's squabble" was reported. Another colonial official summed up the situation exactly when he said, "if traders went in with their eyes open to these places merely for their own gain, they did not deserve the protection of their Government, and that it was better for the Governemnt to say that they would not protect them rather than that they could not, which is in reality the case" (Romilly 1893:151). Indeed naval captains' hands were largely tied since they had no jurisdiction over Islanders or non-British nationals alike. In the absence of serious and unprovoked violence against British traders, the naval officers could not act against the Tuvaluans, and in any case none of them (apart from Captain Moresby in 1872) showed any inclination to do so. Nor did they regard themselves being obliged in any way to give active support to British traders in the group. Certainly Captain Maxwell was willing enough to listen to any grievances that British traders and island leaders may have had against each other, but he treated the two parties differently: the chiefs were generally given advice that was in no way binding while the trader was "cautioned . . . that he was a British subject and was amenable to British law for his acts, whatever they might be, whether he were the instrument of a German firm or any other" (Maxwell 1881:4-5; see also Macdonald 1982:64-67).

After the declaration of a British Protectorate in 1892, traders' activi-

ties came under the scrutiny, albeit irregular, of a resident commissioner. One early commissioner, William Telfer Campbell, despised traders and proceeded against them on the slightest provocation. He was prompted to intervene in 1896 when Richard Collins of Nukulaelae threatened to shoot Lapana, the chief, during a heated disagreement. Campbell was singularly unimpressed with Collins' explanations that Lapana was normally "my best friend," that he had only threatened to "shove" Lapana outside, not to shoot him, and that he had no ammunition for his revolver. Intent on ridding the Protectorate of Collins, Campbell had him conveyed to Funafuti and demanded two sureties of fifty pounds sterling each, in default of which Collins would be deported to Fiji. The high commissioner, while acknowledging that Collins was a "meddlesome" fellow, decided that Campbell's punishment was excessive because Lapana had offered provocation and also because Collins had really "been deported for matters outside the record." The deportation order was rescinded. Collins then "posed as a reformed character" before the visiting missionary from Samoa and got a free passage back to Nukulaelae with his family in the mission ship *John Williams* (Mrs. David 1899:284). Nevertheless Campbell got a measure of revenge by issuing a liquor prohibition order against Collins which helped to quieten him down.[12]

British traders were vastly dissatisfied with their treatment by officialdom and Louis Becke spoke for many when he remarked that "a man in the South Seas now might as well be a Chinaman as an Englishman--for all the protection he will receive" (Becke 1880). It is not surprising in the circumstances that traders of British nationality sometimes toyed with the idea of changing their citizenship.

The German navy, by contrast, was geared to the protection of German commerce in the Western Pacific and spent an estimated fifteen million marks doing so between 1875 and 1895 alone (Kennedy 1974: 106). As W. B. Thompson said, by way of reproach, "The German traders are always . . . taunting us about the action of our Ships of War as compared with theirs and it is a fact that natives will insult an Englishman when they will not dare insult a German or American."[13] Even so, German traders in Tuvalu were, in practice, no better placed than their British counterparts. Certainly the *Ariadne* called at Funafuti and Vaitupu in 1878 and Captain Werner imposed trade and friendship treaties giving Germany most-favored-nation treatment. He also warned the chiefs at both islands that disruptions to German trade and shipping would no longer be tolerated, and at Vaitupu he intervened on behalf of the local DHPG trader, Harry Nitz, in a dispute over a piece of

land (Werner 1889:320-330). But, as Captain Maxwell predicted, the Germans would never succeed in imposing their will on Tuvaluans in the absence of "strong and incessantly applied pressure" (Maxwell 18815). The necessary follow-up action was not forthcoming and the only subsequent German naval visit occurred in 1883 when the *Hyäne* called at Funafuti. In short, the Tuvalu archipelago was too unimportant both from a trading and labor-recruiting point of view to justify the regular oversight of the German navy, and without this coercive presence the treaties of trade and friendship fell away to nothing.

Maxwell, in 1881, was the first naval officer, either British or German, to visit most Tuvalu islands since Moresby's 1872 cruise in the *Basilisk.* Ample time had passed for trading disputes to accumulate and intensify; indeed, Maxwell was dispatched to the Tuvalu, Kiribati, and Marshall islands precisely because there were so many outstanding matters requiring official investigation.[14] Fair-minded though he was, Maxwell left no doubt that the Royal Naval vessels were scarcely at the beck and call of traders. Successive visiting naval officers adopted the same attitude. The balance of local power now tipped in favor of the Tuvaluans and the quality of race relations improved as traders made greater efforts to keep on good terms with Tuvaluans. More aware than before that their business depended on local goodwill, most traders soon accepted, if somewhat pragmatically, that the ground rules had changed and behaved accordingly.

Naval activity in Tuvalu, then, helped the individual island communities in maintaining a show of integrity in the face of pressures from traders on the spot. But the naval captains were only one element in these local dramas; they combined with Samoan pastors, European missionaries, and the competitive trading situation generally to strengthen the position of Tuvaluans in their dealings with their local company traders and, by extension, the wider European trading system itself.

The Routine of Daily Life

As well as having seemingly every other man's hand turned against them, the resident traders also had to contend with the realities of an unamenable physical and social environment. There were, admittedly, some compensations. At least the mosquitoes were not malarial. Furthermore, Tuvalu was an uncommonly peaceful place, and the only traders to be physically harrassed were those who brought it upon themselves, like W. B. Thompson at Funafuti. But the limitations of the restricted atoll diet and the doubtful nutrition of the provisions from

company ships, if they came at all, made inroads into the traders' health, lowered their resistance to secondary illnesses, and sapped their vitality. When Robert Louis Stevenson and his entourage visited several islands of the group in 1890, every trader they met was in poor health, whether it be from food-related complaints such as anemia and boils or from other ailments such as elephantiasis. The two traders at Funafuti were described as "wretched looking objects," and Stevenson's wife, Fanny, was dismayed when the leprosy-inflicted trader at Niutao, whose "fingers were dropping off," shook hands with her (Mrs. Stevenson 1914:89-106). Moreover, Western medical facilities were nonexistent ashore and recurring illness was a fact of life among traders. On one occasion at least the timely arrival of the missionary barque *John Williams* probably saved the life of a sick trader (Powell 1879:3); and in 1896 Harry Nitz of Vaitupu sought treatment in Fiji for his skin complaints, said to be leprosy. [15]

Socially and intellectually traders were little better off. Theirs was an isolating vocation. Detached from the mental climate that had shaped their outlook and values, they were now transplanted in a markedly dissimilar social framework where the dull routine of village life combined with the sameness of the scenery and the infrequency of diversions served to depress the senses, impose a tedium on their lives, and encourage a pattern of heavy drinking. Nor was a trader's existence enlivened by the spartan simplicity of his dwelling, typically a wretchedly appointed native-style house largely bereft of creature comforts. As (George Westbrook pointed out after several years at the game in Funafuti during the 1880s:

> If you would only bear in mind what a wretched life it is living on one of these sandbanks, no company, no amusements, no Theatres, no Bank Holidays, no beefsteak or fresh vegetables for 7 years, if sick no doctor, no news from home or friends, letters often lost or laid carelessly by, several times I have not received letters until long after written.[16]

Outside observers would not have been surprised at such regrets. "It is one of the saddest features of this . . . voyage [to Tuvalu, Tokelau, and Kiribati]," reported one LMS missionary more in pity than disgust, "to note the solitary and wasted lives [of traders] on almost every island, awaiting a lonely grave in this vast ocean solitude" (Claxton 1889:9). "Truly," observed another traveler, "the traders life on these islands must be fearfully monotonous. Some are unvisited for nine months or a year and the natives are far from cheerful company for an educated

man" (Woodford 1884:75). Actually most Tuvalu islands experienced a far higher frequency of shipping contacts by the 1880s as a direct result of increasing competition in the island trade. Passing ships sometimes left behind reading matter (Gill 1872:9; Le Hunte n.d.:15; Woodford 1884:16; Thurston 1893:10), and the arrival of a company vessel was usually an eagerly awaited event as it brought provisions, mail, news of the world, and fellowship (Dana 1935: 197-199). But the diversion was only momentary. Often before nightfall the ship had disappeared over the horizon, leaving the traders to resume their monotonous, unhealthy, and enervating existence.

Part of the problem was the ambivalent social identity that Tuvaluans accorded traders in their midst. Whether trading on their own account, or in the capacity of company agents, traders were never just individuals to be judged on their own merits. They were also seen as representatives of an alien trading system whose rationale violated a local reciprocity system based on generosity and sharing. The disjunction between the two was fundamental, and being associated with the former resulted in traders being part of, yet detached from, village life. Marrying into the community, as most traders did, helped ease these problems of allegiance and identity; but marriage could be a two-edged sword. It gave traders access to a domestic life and the support, more or less, of an extensive network of affines. But this wider social identity could also carry the penalty of the wife's relatives expecting preferential treatment in trading relations. Nevertheless, these marriages were usually lasting relationships from which some of the leading families in Tuvalu--the O'Briens, the Kleises, and the Restures (a corruption of Restieaux)--are descended.[17]

The harsh facts in a trader's life were the heat, tedium, and mosquitoes, the often claustrophobic social pressures of village life, and the inability to get away from one's problems. The pervasiveness of mission-inspired local laws and pastor domination were another bone of contention; often small in themselves, such irritations had a cumulative effect and intruded heavily on a trader's existence. Sometimes the sum total of frustrations and hardships became intolerable and, provoked once too often, traders could react dramatically. The Chinese trader at Niutao in 1878 reached the limit of his endurance when he was fined for killing a chicken on Sunday. In a fury "he killed it a second time! ! !" and when he was dragged off to the *maneapa* he used the "most filthy language towards the King and chiefs" (Turner 1878:56).

Given the frustrations of their lives and the basic conflict of interests between traders and Tuvaluans it is not surprising that an undercurrent of racial antipathy was often part of a trader's stock of attitudes, even

though most were married to a Tuvaluan. Much of the time such sentiments were well under control since their business operations in large part depended on local goodwill. But in the case of an open disagreement and particularly a boycott, these suppressed feelings of dislike and contempt were liable to come explicitly to the fore.[18]

The paradox is that station-trading became a way of life. Frank Thomas had been twenty-seven years in the business before he came to Vaitupu in 1882. Normally he was an independent but on that occasion he was in the employ of Henderson and Macfarlane (Bridge 1883:3; Dana 1935:201-207; Davis 1892:81-82). Another familiar figure in the Island trade was the "old man-of-war's man" Charlie Douglas, who for over thirty years following his departure from Niutao was to be found on one or other of the Marshall Islands until his death in 1892 from a fall on board a visiting vessel (Young 1875-1877:26; Le Hunte 1883:44; Davis 1892:21, 92). Tom Day (or O'Day) was another permanent fixture. It was for his benefit that Captain Moresby bombarded Nanumea in 1872. He left the atoll soon after and at one stage was to be found at Nikunau in southern Kiribati. Described as "another of these pitiful old blackguards," he returned to Tuvalu in 1893 as Henderson and Macfarlane's trader at Nanumanga and died the following year at Nanumea.[19]

There were a number of reasons why traders remained traders. Trading life was usually no worse and often a great deal better than anything available elsewhere. Many, it will be recalled, were traders to begin with because they could not make a success of anything else. Those who attempted to break out of the system were usually forced back into it again. As time went on their options contracted and their life chances diminished. Often no richer than the day they started trading and in far worse physical shape, they had little prospect of gaining a livelihood back in Europe or Australia, however much they yearned to go back and settle down with their "own people" (Dana 1935:260-267). Ideas of return were doubly remote for traders who had married across racial lines and who knew that their wives and children would have difficulty adjusting and would never be socially acceptable outside the Pacific. A certain ambivalence may also be detected because the Island world and the European world each had their attractions and drawbacks. In the end it was a choice between either one or the other, and circumstances usually forced a return to the Islands, where at least the trader was his own master in the limited sense that his work was not subject to constant oversight. Jack Buckland, who traded at Niutao and Nanumea during the 1890s, made the most of his situation. In singular fashion he "spent a short period each year in Sydney playing spendthrift on the

accumulations of a small funded income and the rest of the year vegetating penniless as a petty trader out in the islands."[20]

Once they had accepted the reality of their situation, traders often then made a virtue out of necessity and developed an ethos and mystique of their own in which they became the sturdy and self-reliant knights of commerce. The reality was that traders were uncommonly dependent--on their company vessels for provisions, reading matter, and news of the outside world; on warships for all these things in lesser measure and for protection; and on Tuvaluans for copra. Station-trading, moreover, was a dead end and so became a way of life by default. It was exceptional for a trader to find another livelihood. Louis Becke got out and eventually used his literary skills to make a living; even then he wrote mostly about the "world of traders, supercargoes and their native contacts" of which he was once part (Maude 1967:225). Otherwise, traders moved to port towns like Apia where their domestic arrangements were within the pale of civic respectability.

Here we return to the wider question of resident traders' self-perceptions and attitudes. On the subject of Louis Becke, Pearson (1984:81) makes the observation that Becke's writings show "a notable lack of criticism or even of the desire for any other kind of world than . . . one free from the restraints of home society, free from the operation of conscience." This statement indirectly points to the dilemma and the ambivalence of the traders' situation, They were disparaged by missionaries, distrusted by their employers, discriminated against by naval authorities, hounded by resident commissioners, regarded as "seedy loafers" by a British judicial commissioner (Le Hunte n.d.:14), and condemned by a high commissioner for introducing their "rotten, pestilential civilisation" (Thurston 1893). In consequence, traders increasingly became estranged from their own society and developed something of a siege mentality. Left to fend for themselves, or so it seemed, they in turn saw no obligation to uphold the values of their own societies. Many therefore left the impression, often justified, of being profligate, godless, hostile toward constituted authority, and devoid of enduring values. Traders thus acquired an equivocal social identity. On the one hand they were regarded by other Europeans as an outgroup. Yet they were more or less unsuccessful in integrating into village life and so they remained tied, if tenuously, to the moorings of the European world.

The Decline of Trading Life

In 1892 Britain declared a Protectorate over the then Ellice Islands. The move slightly postdated other changes that had gradually whittled

down the number of resident traders in the archipelago. This process of attrition began in 1888 with Ruge's bankruptcy and the final withdrawal of the DHPG a year and a half later, leaving Henderson and Macfarlane with the field to themselves (Munro 1982:198-205). Their monopoly was strengthened in 1893 by a mail subsidy for their vessel SS *Archer* to call at Fiji, Tuvalu, and Kiribati (Couper 1967:83). Capitalizing on this concession, Henderson and Macfarlane landed a handful of new traders in the group, namely Jack Buckland at Niutao, Tom Day at Nanumanga, Richard Collins at Nukulaelae, and Edmund Duffy at Nanumea.[21] But Henderson and Macfarlane's monopoly did not last. The Australian company Burns Philp entered the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorates in 1898 and consolidated its position in 1902 with the award of an Australian government mail subsidy to provide regular shipping to the Protectorates (Buckley and Klugman 1981:80-81). They in turn encountered competition from Levers Pacific Plantations in 1903,[22] and from Captain E. F. H. Allen of the Samoa Shipping and Trading Company in 1911.[23]

Several changes differentiated the new trading dispensation from the precolonial order. It was based largely on steamships rather than sailing vessels; Anglo-Australasian companies rather than German firms dominated the business; and the shore-based company agent gradually became redundant. Tuvaluans, now compelled to make quantities of copra for the Queen's Tax, had become so accustomed to the requirements of trading companies that they dealt directly with the trading steamers' supercargoes. Indeed at Funafuti in 1910 a native trading company was running in direct competition with the resident half-caste trader, who was probably a son of Jack O'Brien (Buckley and Klugman 1981:265; Macdonald 1982: 141). A further structural change to trading in Tuvalu occurred in 1914 when Captain Allen transferred his Apia headquarters to Funafuti.[24] From this atoll base he plied Tuvalu and neighboring archipelagoes much in the manner of the speculative owner-traders of the mid-nineteenth century, and serviced plantations on the uninhabited islands of Nassau, Niulakita, and in the Phoenix group (Allen n.d.). In other words the copra trade in Tuvalu reverted back to a predominantly ship-based operation in which the shore-based agent of old had no place.

Nevertheless, a handful of resident traders in the Protectorate remained on their islands, long-established identities who were so institutionalized that they stayed on to serve out their time if only in retirement. When Henry Nitz passed away at Vaitupu in 1906, and Martin Kleis at Nui in 1908, each had spent over thirty years on his respective island almost without break.[25] Jack O'Brien's death at Funafuti in 1899

(Waite 1899:540n) ended a turbulent career in the group that spanned four decades. He arrived in pagan times and stayed on to witness many transformations in the Tuvaluan way of life. In his twilight years at Funafuti he "constantly expatiated on the good old times when he first came to the island, when the people held feasts, public games, dances, and such-like pleasures, most of which have been put down by the missionaries. He said things were much more lively in those days" (Mrs. David 1899: 167). Ironically, he himself had helped prepare the way for the LMS by desecrating and then destroying many of the old religious structures forty years before.

The last of this group of stayers was Alfred Restieaux. He was typical of the trader who would die in the Islands, "perhaps cherishing to the last the fancy of a visit home" but "doomed . . . to remain indefinitely on one narrow atoll" (Farrell 1928:351; Stevenson 1900:2). Like O'Brien he said that only his Tuvaluan wife and children prevented his return to somewhere like Sydney (Mrs. David 1899:132; Mrs. Stevenson 1914:91). Both were probably rationalizing to a certain extent. Heavily in debt to the DHPG throughout the 1880s he was simply abandoned when they pulled out of Tuvalu. He never traded again but instead went to Nukufetau, his wife's home island, to live out his days in reduced circumstances. His health was not good and his eyesight progressively deteriorated. Although described by visiting naval captains as "doing nothing," Restieaux in fact wrote a series of reminiscences that have proved valuable to historians and other students of this period in Tuvalu. With his passing in 1911, an era in Tuvaluan commercial history drew to a close. [26]

Tuvalu was one of the first archipelagoes to experience the demise of its resident trader population. [27] By 1911 the rationale for trading companies placing agents on islands--namely to encourage production for barter and to reduce the turnaround time of the ship collecting the cargo--was no longer there. Production was now stimulated by a King's Tax, payable in copra, and the trading routine was so well established that Tuvaluans preferred to deal directly with the visiting supercargoes. The middleman had been effectively cut out and in 1910 the two remaining traders in the group were the half-caste descendants of late traders (Wallin 1910).

Wider economic imperatives combined with local circumstance to preclude the return of resident traders to Tuvalu. Burns Philp established a headstation in Kiribati in 1913 that included Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands within its orbit. Although subsidized by regular renewals of its Australian government mail contract (Buckley and

Klugman 1983:25, 66, 99), the firm lost ground in Tuvalu and concentrated instead on the more lucrative Marshall and Kiribati archipelagoes. The matter of establishing trading stations throughout Tuvalu was often discussed. But the cost of erecting such facilities would have outweighed the benefits and it was recommended that the group could be better worked if another vessel was added to the Gilberts fleet. The tempo picked up during the early 1920s with company vessels making two or three trips to the group per year and a trading station being established at Nukufetau. However, as a result of diverting a vessel two or three times a year to service Tuvalu as well as the occasional call to Ocean Island, the seat of government of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, Burns Philp's Gilberts fleet became overworked. The firm attempted to rationalize by withdrawing from the Marshalls and transferring SS *Murua* to the Tuvalu run, which resulted in the wreck of the vessel at Nanumea in April 1921.[28]

With his headquarters at Funafuti, Burns Philp's only competitor in Tuvalu, Captain Allen, was better placed to profit from the group. His advantage was increased by the success with which he tendered for the King's Tax, because he usually carried superior lines of trade goods (Couper 1967:103), and because his agreement with Burns Philp to sell trade goods at the same prices meant that he could not be undercut.[29] He also ran profitable sidelines by providing building materials for churches and conveying government personnel. But during the 192Os, with a combination of family problems and his ships being wrecked or condemned, Captain Allen's enterprises fell on hard times and were bought up by Burns Philp shortly after his death in 1924. The following year the Tuvalu portion of Burns Philp's Tarawa Branch was transferred to the firm's Apia Branch. [30]

These organizational changes to the Tuvalu copra trade effectively put an end to any possibility of a recrudescence of resident traders in the group. Essentially, then, they were a transitional social group that (existed over a fifty to sixty year period to meet the needs of a particular stage of the Island trade, dying out when that stage gave way to another. In their time they played an important part in the most momentous period of Tuvalu history, which saw the shift from an isolated, independent, self-sufficient, and pagan life-style to one that was Christian, literate, partially dependent on a range of imported goods, involved in a wider sphere of political activity, and largely accepting of missionary and colonial rule.

Yet the passing of this specialized social group was swift and almost unnoticed. In 1926, only fifteen years after Alfred Restieaux's death at

Nukufetau, Tuvalu's commercial environment took another change in direction, and with the establishment of the first cooperative trading society (Macdonald 1982:142) the group's economic climate was even further removed from the one that had enabled the existence of resident traders. Such was the pace of change that by 1926 most of Tuvalu's younger generation would never have laid eyes on a resident trader.

ABBREVIATIONS

BP	Becke Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
BPh	Records of Burns Philp Company Ltd., Rare Books and Special Collections Library, University of Sydney. (These records are presently being reboxed and to some extent resorted.)
CO 225	Records of the Colonial Office, Public Records Office, London. *
ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney.
PMB	Pacific Manuscript Bureau, Manuscript Series. Available on microfilm at member libraries of the Bureau. For details see any recent issue of *Pambu,* the Bureau's newsletter.
RNAS	Records of the Commander-in-Chief, Royal Navy Australia Station, National Archives of New Zealand, Wellington. *
RP	Restieaux Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (consulted on microfilm in the Department of Pacific & SE Asian History, Australian National University, Canberra).
SSJ	Records of the London Missionary Society, South Sea Journals. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. *
SSL	Records of the London Missionary Society, South Sea Letters. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. *
SSR	Records of the London Missionary Society, South Sea Records. School of Oriental and African Studies, London. *
TP	Towns Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
WP	Westbrook Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
WPHC 4	Records of the Western Pacific High Commission, Series 4, Inwards Correspondence--General. Public Records Office, London. *

**Consulted on microfilm at either the Mitchell Library, Sydney, or the National Library of Australia, Canberra.*

NOTES

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Harry Maude has been unfailingly kind and supportive over the years. I dedicate this paper to him.

1. Pacific Island traders were like English agricultural laborers and Australian convicts in that they left few written remains. Only four of the seventy or so traders in Tuvalu between c. 1855 and 1909 left reminiscences or letters. George Westbrook's experiences at Funafuti and Niutao during the 1880s have been published as Dana 1935:169-258. Further material is in the Westbrook Papers housed in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. The Westbrook Papers also contain a valuable set of manuscripts written by his fellow trader at Funafuti, Alfred Restieaux, available only on microfilm. They are not autobiographical but relate to the doings of other traders. The surviving letters and papers of Louis Becke are held by the Mitchell Library, Sydney. Becke also published a number of semi-fictional accounts, some of which have been utilized in the present article. Included among the Becke Papers is a useful diary kept by George Winchcombe, who traded on several of the Tuvalu islands. See the bibliography for details.

Despite being a small sample, the situations and experiences of these four men are sufficiently representative of traders in Tuvalu that I feel safe in making extensive use of their writings. Inevitably, however, I have had to rely for most of my information on the writings of people who were not traders.

2. Tuvalu is the present-day name for the former Ellice Islands. The other indigenized place-names used in this article are Kiribati (which includes the former Gilbert Islands) and Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides). Unlike Kiribati and Vanuatu, Tuvalu appears to have been the traditional name its inhabitants applied to their island group.

3. The single exception was the plantation at Nukulaelae operated by the Godeffroy/DHPG establishment from 1865 until 1890 (see Munro and Besnier 1985). Unreferenced statements in this section relating to the European trading system and Tuvalu's place in it have been drawn from Brookfield 1972: chs. 1-4; Couper 1967; Macdonald 1982: ch. 2; Munro 1982: chs. 2, 7, 8.

4. Restieaux MSa; Moresby 1872:163; Logbook of *Elizabeth,* 16 Sept. 1861, Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass. (PMB 290, frame 731).

5. Eury to Towns & Co., 10 Feb. 1868, TP, Uncat. MSS set 307, item 89; Eury to Towns & Co., 19 Feb. 1868, TP, Uncat. MSS set 307, item 91; *Sydney Mail,* 28 Aug. 1869, 12b. I owe these references to Harry Maude.

6. Titi's identity is uncertain. He may have been Robert Towns' agent Solomon Heather (Maude 1968:265n.); or he may equally have been a man named Marshall who was discharged from the New England whaling bark *Stafford* in 1861 (see Logbook of *Stafford,* 2 Nov. [1861], Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass. [PMB 957]). In 1874 a Mr. Marshall was trading at Vaitupu as Bully Hayes' agent (see *Samoanische Zeitung,* 11 Jan. 1914, 11b). This was probably the same person who was discharged from the *Stafford,* but there is no evidence that Marshall lived continuously on Vaitupu between these dates.

7. This interpretation is more fully argued in Munro 1982: ch. 4. On the subject of trader involvement in the destruction of the pagan religion, Michael Goldsmith (personal communication, 16 Aug. 1982) suggests that some of the "softening-up" they effected might have been because Tuvaluans did not regard missionaries and traders as belonging to discrete occupational categories. This is not to suggest that there were no differences between the two in the eyes of the Tuvaluans. Rather, the differences that the traders and missionaries considered important very likely did not match local criteria, with the result that traders were perhaps seen as "missionaries as well," just as the missionaries-proper who followed would have been perceived to some extent as "traders."

8. There is an annual island-by-island breakdown of traders in Tuvalu for the years 1865-1892 in table 7:3 of my thesis (Munro 1982:186-190). I will be happy to respond to readers who require further details.

9. Vaitoru to Thurston, 16 Nov. 1893, translated by E. A. Duffy, trader on Nanumea, WPHC 4, 76/1893. The background to this episode is detailed in Chambers 1984: 112-113, 151; *Munro* 1982:147, 147n.

10. Thompson to Gorrie, [n.d.], encl. in WPHC 4, 30/1878.

11. See encls. in CO 225/1/16498 and in RNAS 13/49; Turner 1878:11-21.

12. See encls. in WPHC 4, 69/1897; WPHC 4 ,316/1897; WPHC 4, 456/1897; CO 225/52/10715; CO 225/52/10179; CO 225/52/18023.

13. Thompson to Gorrie, [n.d.], encl. in WPHC 4, 30/1878.

14. Gordon to Kimberley, 23 Apr. 1881, CO 225/7/9875; Maxwell to Gordon, 16 Apr. 1881, WPHC 4, 80/1881.

15. Campbell to Thurston, 5 Dec. 1896, WPHC 4, 68/1897.

16. Westbrook to the trustees of Henderson & Macfarlane's estate, 10 Jan. 1890, WP, folder 43.

17. At this point it is worth drawing attention to a comment by Niko Besnier (personal communication, 23 Jan. 1986). He suggests that

> the adaptational difficulties faced by traders on Tuvaluan atolls can probably be explained by a combination of the extreme isolation of the atolls and of another factor, namely the very big difference in ethos between Tuvaluan and Western cultures. Margaret Mead ("Public Opinion Mechanisms among Primitive Peoples," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1 [1937]: 5-16) has suggested that cultures may be typologized in terms of the basis on which their ethos is channeled, recognizing "personal" (e.g., Arapesh), "positional" (e.g., the Iatmul), "traditional" (e.g., Bali), and "positional-traditional" (e.g., Samoa, the Zuni) categories (cf. also Felix and Mary Keesing, *Elite Communication in Samoa,* Stanford: Stan-

ford University Press, 1956, p. 258, for discussion on Samoa). Tuvaluan culture, where many of the individual's choices in life are made by the social system, is positional-traditional with a vengeance. This accounts for (i) the receptiveness of Tuvaluans to the laws established by the Samoan pastors (and later Grimble) dictating behavior in excruciating detail of everyday life; and (ii) the extreme difficulties outsiders may have dealing with such ethos (even today, as I am sure you know well!).

18. This aspect of life goes unmentioned in Becke's nostalgic published account of his eleven months' residence at Nanumanga (see Becke 1909:54-104). For Restieaux's opinion of Becke, see Restieaux MSd.

19. Hayter 1871-1873: entry for 21 July 1872; Mrs. Stevenson 1914:120-123; Thurston 1893:9-10; Swayne to Thurston, 18 Dec. 1893, WPHC 4, 21/1894; Swayne to Thurston, 17 Jan. 1895, WPHC 4, 42/1895.

20. Furnas 1951:365. There was an unhappy sequel, which Mrs. Stevenson (1914:175n.) relates: "Some years ago when Jack was at his station he received word that his trustee, who was in charge of his property, had levanted it all. Whereupon poor Jack put a pistol to his head and blew out what brains he possessed. He was a beautiful creature, terribly annoying at times, but with something childlike and appealing--I think he was close to what the Scotch call a natural--that made one forgive pranks in him that which would be unforgivable in others. He was very proud of being the original 'Tommy Hadden' in [R. L. Stevenson's book] the 'Wrecker,' and carried the book wherever he went."

21. Mrs. Stevenson 1914:106; Davis 1892:52; Swayne to Thurston, 18 Dec. 1893, WPHC 4, 21/1894. Even so not all islands had a resident trader; in 1897 the resident commissioner reported, "There is no trader on the island [of Nukufetau] but I believe one of Messrs Henderson and Macfarlane's traders will shortly commence trading. His arrival is anxiously looked forward to by the great majority of the natives who are suffering from a tobacco famine." See Campbell to Berkeley, 22 Sept. 1897, encl. in CO 225/52/25701.

22. *Samoanische Zeitung*, 4 Nov. 1905, 8c, 2 Dec. 1905, 8b, 8 Feb. 1908, 8c; Wallin 1910. Ken Buckley and Kris Klugman kindly gave me access to Wallin's report of 30 Jan. 1910. Wallin wrote several other reports that Dr. Buckley and Ms. Klugman have edited for publication as accompanying text for a photographic volume on Burns Philp's Pacific activities. The book, to be published by George Allen & Unwin Australia, is scheduled for release in early 1987.

23. Allen n.d. I am grateful to Hugh Laracy for making available a Xerox copy of this typescript. Dr. Laracy will be writing an essay on Captain Allen for a collection of biographical essays he is working on.

24. See encls. in WPHC 4, 616/1914; WPHC 4, 1133/1914; WPHC 4, 2376/1914.

25. These are the dates on their tombstones, which I observed during fieldwork in 1978. See also Newell 1906:17.

26. Dana 1935:189-196; Davis 1892:31; Mahaffy 1909:26; Thurston 1893:8; *Sumoanische Zeitung*, 6 Jan. 1912.

27. Mahaffy 1909:24-26. But on a regional scale the resident trader's day was not quite over. Louis Becke (1897:317-319) etched the last act of the drama before the curtain finally descended. In doing so he drew the apt comparison with the continuing retreat of

James Fenimore Cooper's "gaunt old trapper" Natty Bumppo from the advancing tide of civilization in the American West.

28. See the Tarawa Manager's Annual Reports for 1920 and 1921, BPh; Buckley and Klugman 1983:128; Couper 1967:87.

29. Joseph Mitchell, Notes on the Gilbert, Ellice and Marshall Trades, 22 Nov. 1916, BPh.

30. Tarawa Manager's Annual Report for 1925, BPh; Buckley and Klugman1983: 137.

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