PERSONAL WORK HISTORIES OF SOLOMON ISLANDS PLANTATION LABOURERS--METHODOLOGY AND USES

by Judith A. Bennett

Both the methodology used and the data examined in this paper are products of field work conducted in 1976 in the Solomon Islands as part of a major research project entitled, "Wealth of the Solomons: a history of trade, plantations and society, c. 1800-1945."[1] The gathering of oral evidence was carried out in three main regions--the Shortland Islands, southern Guadalcanal (Weather Coast), the Arosi district of west San Cristobal, and in the Sie Sie or the Kwaio district on west Malaita (Figure 1). Information was collected through oral interviews from participants and as such may be classified as oral testimony or oral history. This paper will provide a description of the methods used in collecting information on the involvement of Solomon Islanders in commerce prior to World War II; the rationale for the adoption of this technique and finally, the usefulness of the data obtained. For two reasons, the emphasis will necessarily be on the practical side of collecting testimonies: 1) The increasing trend among modern historians to use oral accounts including both tradition and testimony[2] and 2) the absence of specific guidelines for the novice historian.[3] It is too frequently assumed that the student somehow knows or learns along the way how to effectively collect oral history. In fact, this often happens when the investigator concerned is fortunate enough to have some background in human geography, sociology or anthropology. But it is not uncommon even at the present time, for students of Pacific History to go into the field with little or no training in the basic techniques of collecting oral testimony.

Advantages

This method of collecting oral history is applicable, not simply to the collection of personal employment data, but to a wide number of situations, especially where quantitative information is required for comparative purposes.[4] Even though such information is inevitably a sample, if for no other reason than because it has been gathered only from the survivors of events which occurred thirty to sixty years ago, nonetheless, its validity is proportionate to the extent of the geographic region canvassed,

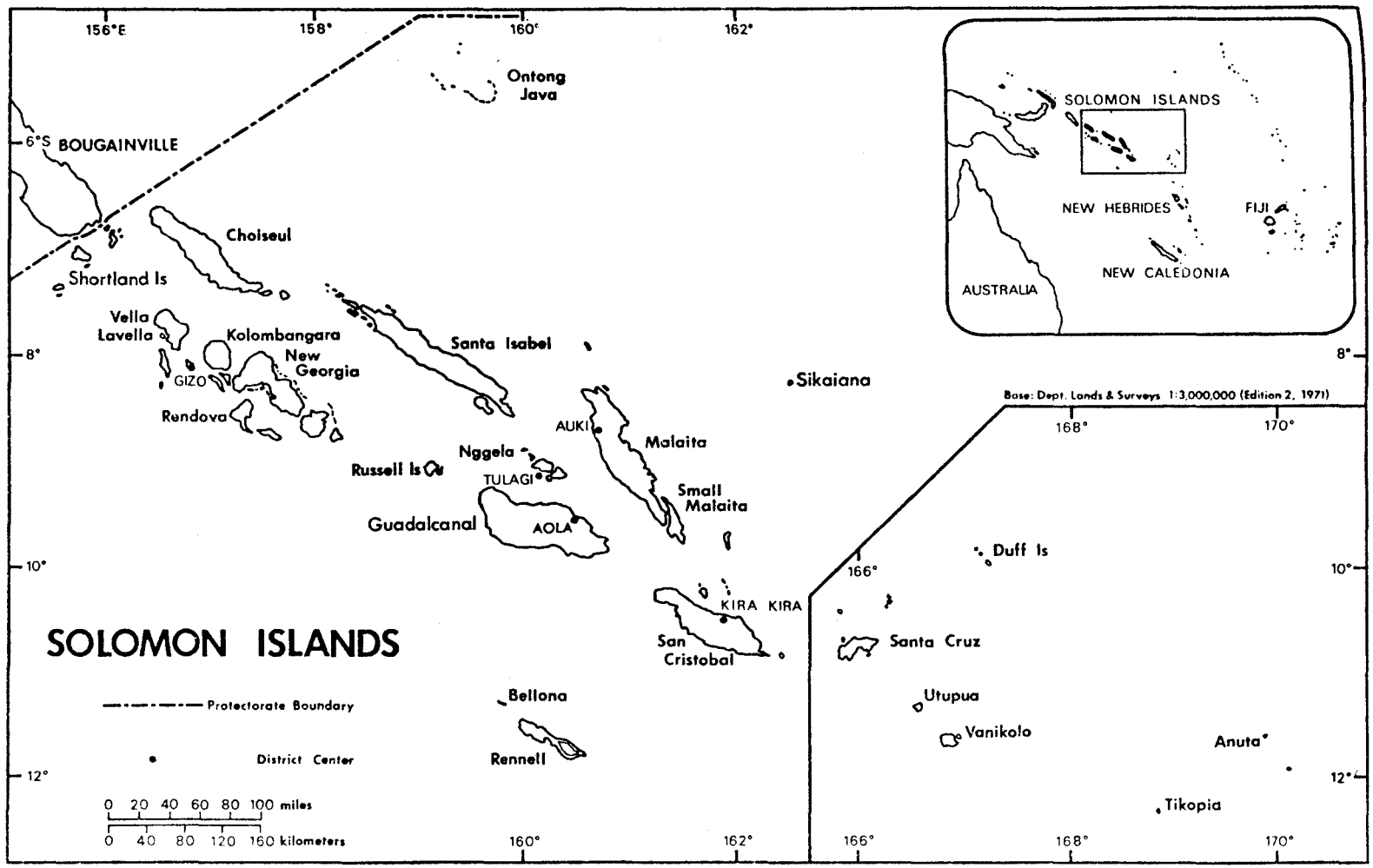

Figure 1 Solomon Islands, c. 1920

the numbers of informants to the appropriate age cohort and the constant testing of the data for internal consistency.

Methodology

The key to the effective gathering of data from oral sources is the preparation mode prior to field work. This cannot be overstressed. The researcher should prepare by 1) gaining a working knowledge of the dominant language or *linguafranca,* 2) studying all ethnographic and anthropological writings related to the people involved in the research, and 3) reading and assessing all known documentary sources. The first prerequisite is so essential as to not warrant extensive comment. Even a halting attempt at the language will be appreciated by informants and fluency soon comes in the field if one lives in a village situation. The second prerequisite, if done well, should provide the researcher with enough knowledge of the society, for the establishment of rapport and the formulation of questions acceptable to the people under study. Moreover, a knowledge of the society confers an understanding of the values and attitudes necessary to interpretation. The third prerequisite, an extensive knowledge of written sources, is too often postponed until after field work, and results in the realization that a lot more questions should have been asked of informants, A Pacific historian these days rarely has the time or the money to make second and third visits to the field to fill in gaps in the data he/she failed to collect on the first visit. Even when this is possible it is likely that some informants will have died or moved away. It is extremely difficult to say just how much time should be spent in preparation. Nine months to a year is a minimal time period, however, for preparation prior to field work on the Islands.. It would be difficult to justify less time if the student is unfamiliar with the people, and if the topic concentrates on significant indigenous involvement in events. Thus, say, a study of European colonial society in a particular period in the Solomons would pose different problems to a study of the effect of colonial labour policy on village communities. The focus in the first would be the Europeans, while the Solomon Islanders would be central to the second. The relative importance of oral testimony from the Solomon Islanders would be greater in the latter although still of some value to the former.

Familiarity with documentary sources also gives the researcher a basis for selecting field-work sites. In my case, the entire Solomon Islands was my area of interest, but with constraints on time and finance, the number of sites that could be visited was limited. Through information from written records. I was able to select specific regions which would reveal most

clearly any differences in patterns of involvement with and response to European Commercial activity.

With a detailed knowledge of what the written record holds, the researcher is also in a position to formulate a series of questions on topics about which the record is silent, or which are likely to be seen in a different perspective by Island informants. In my case, the questions, drawn up before field work, were modified early in the research, a normal pretesting procedure. In addition, they were varied slightly according to local differences. For example, a woman who never left her home district in her lifetime would not be questioned as to her experiences of wage labour, but rather as to the effects of her husband being absent from the village. Although the final form of the questionnaire was slightly different from the first, the basic check list remained the same.

The Questionnaire

Questions primarily focused on the following:

a. The experiences of men and women on plantations and in other paid employment away from the village.
b. The involvement, at village level, of people in the commercial sector or other non-subsistence employment (e.g., catechist).
c. The effect on village life of men's plantation employment (women's viewpoint included).
d. The place of birth and residence as indicative of access to certain opportunities (e.g., people living in inland or "bush" areas could not produce copra as coastal or "saltwater" people could), and as evidence of major life changes (e.g., many "bush" people moved to coastal settlements following conversion to Christianity).
e. The impact of World War II. This was beyond the scope of the time span set, but was used as a stimulus for highlighting the contrasts with pre-war employment and for eliciting attitudes to colonial policies and plantation employers (see Appendices I and II).

The main advantage of having a standard set of questions is that the data so gained become comparable, making it possible to recognize within the one group of informants how widespread a particular phenomenon is, or whether it is idiosyncratic or general. On a macro-level, comparisons between regions may reveal differences or similarities which provoke a deeper level of inquiry into causation than documentary sources have stimulated.

Prior to my field work I had an extensive correspondence with Solomon Islanders in the government and in the geographic areas in which I hoped to work. This was done in order to obtain both the people's permission and their support. Once I arrived in the Solomons I first contacted representatives from the selected sites. Following this a number of announcements were made on the radio explaining the nature of the research. Once at the sites I had long discussions with village and community leaders to answer any queries they might have had and then went about seeking suitable interpreters.

While in any given area I worked consistently with the one interpreter or liaison officer who was either a member of the Legislative Assembly, a local councilor, or former councilor. These individuals knew their own area well and knew where likely informants could be found. I had worked in the Solomons before in 1972 and could speak fluent Pidgin. When Pidgin failed among the old men in isolated areas, the interpreter would assist. I was especially fortunate in having intelligent, interested interpreters who were well acquainted with what I wanted and who were willing to practice several "trial runs." Few older women could speak Pidgin, so when interviewing them I was usually assisted by younger female interpreters. I was also conscious that some men, due to their relationship to women and the concomitant social proprieties, could not ask some questions without embarrassment.

All interviews were tape-recorded. The presence of a portable cassette tape-recorder though inhibiting to many Westerners, was actually an aid to rapport. Everyone was curious to hear their own and their friends' voices. Interviews in almost every case were conducted in the informants' village or home among relatives and friends who provided a stimulus and a means of cross-checking information. Discussion among such people jogged memories and clarified points of fact. This group interviewing method was more productive if children were absent, something not always possible to arrange unfortunately.

Generally speaking, the interviews were "directed" since the questionnaire, which I soon memorized, was the basis for discussion. However, when informants were particularly interested in one topic or related issues a non-directive approach prevailed temporarily.

All interviews were subsequently transcribed into English, but the demands of economy and the logistics of interviewing approximately 160 people, some for several hours over a couple of days, meant I had to reuse cassette tapes after transcribing the contents. A better method would have been the use of a reel-to-reel recorder located in my village base, as a data base for the cassette material. Transcripts are useful but with the

verbatim account a more perfect oral record would have been preserved for use by other scholars.

A major problem during the gathering and collating of data is the dating of events and the fixing of people and places in time. Most Melanesians who were adult before World War II do not conceptualize time in numerical years in a calendrical sequence. This difficulty was overcome by the use of two simple techniques. The first and most utilized "essentially involves the linkage of recollected *public* events with *personal* activities or events which occur within a known and restricted age range."[5] This is sometimes known as the "historical calendar" method. In order to discover the *public events* of a particular region, one must be familiar with the written records. Thus a researcher can obtain the information necessary to construct the calendar. This brings us back to the absolute necessity for careful preparatory research in the documentary material prior to fieldwork. The historical calendar sets up a date and an event which would be known by most people in a specific area--in this example, southern Guadalcanal (see Appendix III). From this, the dating of "personal activities or events," such as a person's first recruitment for a plantation, or time of marriage, can be done with some accuracy. Of course, when a person went beyond his district for work, public events or "markers" specific to that area would be used--such as the name of a particular government labour inspector or district officer stationed there (see Appendix IV) or some dramatic occurrence like an earthquake, a shipwreck, or a murder.

For example, an old man from Duidui (on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal) said his first employment as a labourer was when he went as a young man to Papatura plantation on Santa Isabel, where he was treated very well, being nursed through a serious illness by the European manager. A number of questions arose, including who owned the plantation, and just when all of this happened. If the last question could be answered, the first could be ascertained from information in the written record. I assumed by his appearance that the man was at least seventy years old, so I asked him if he was recruited before or after Mr. Lees came as a missionary to the nearby village of Inakona. He replied that Mr. Lees came soon after. I then asked if it was after the government came to Aola (district station, Guadalcanal). He said no, that the government was still only at Tulagi (the capital on Ngela). This would make his date of departure between 1912 and 1914. Several other questions could have been asked to check this--for example, the name of the recruiting ship and/or its captain, (as all recruiting ships were listed in government records); the name of the government officer who witnessed his indenture at Tulagi, or the

name of the government inspector who visited the plantation. If there was no inspector this too would confirm that his employment was prior to 1916 when plantation inspections became regular annual events.

In addition to the historical calendar method another technique was used when only one or a general date marker was known for a certain area. A case in point was trying to date the visit of the first local (not overseas) labour recruiter to a Weather Coast village. An informant stated that he was born during that year, so his father told him, and that he remembered being a small boy when Mr. Lees came to Inakona in 1912. He was then asked to point out a child of approximately the same size from the village audience. I assigned an age to this specified child as I knew from baptismal, immunization and council certificates how old the child was. In the above example, if the informant was reckoned to have been about seven years of age when Lees came to the central coast, and if the recruiter first came to the village in the year of the informant's birth, then the approximate date of this recruiting visit was 1905 (1912 minus seven years).

Initially, data obtained during interviews were verified or rejected according to internal consistency. Consistency between informants on common matters was also tested. Higher reliability was placed upon information confirmed by other informants and/or written records. Generally, there were very few directly contradictory statements about factual events, but there were some omissions of certain aspects or details of events as reported by different individuals.

Rationale

It seems almost superfluous to have to justify the use of oral testimony. The discipline of history requires that all available evidence of value be studied and assessed. Whether that evidence is a chance set of letters that survived the ravages of time or the remembered experiences of a participant matters little. Both are only samples; both are pieces of a much larger jigsaw puzzle. Both have inherent bias but both are susceptible to checking by basically similar methods,

The aim in gathering data from the testimony of Solomon Islanders was simply to find out their impressions and experiences--experiences which were not recorded elsewhere. This is not a method that is solely applicable to studies of non-western, traditionally pre-literate peoples. It is a method that can and ought to be used for all those silent, non-literate or non-literary groups of people who remain hidden from the wider history of society. While research along these lines is not entirely new, it has only

flowered in the last decade or so in Australia--the James Cook University's oral history project being a good example.[6]

In the case of the Solomons, however, the need to obtain this kind of information was even more important because almost all documentary sources had been written by English or Australian-born Caucasians. Their cultural background, plus the colonial ethos of the pre-war period, meant that they were either, at best, insensitive to Solomon Islander perspectives or, at worst, totally ignorant of them. Thus, while the general justification for the use of oral testimony is the need to achieve balance, there are also specific areas where this information was particularly significant. In some cases, the oral evidence was the only source available. On other issues, the oral evidence reinforced the deductions made from documentary sources, But most importantly, oral evidence, while rarely contradicting the basic framework of an event, frequently revealed a strikingly different perspective from that of the written account.

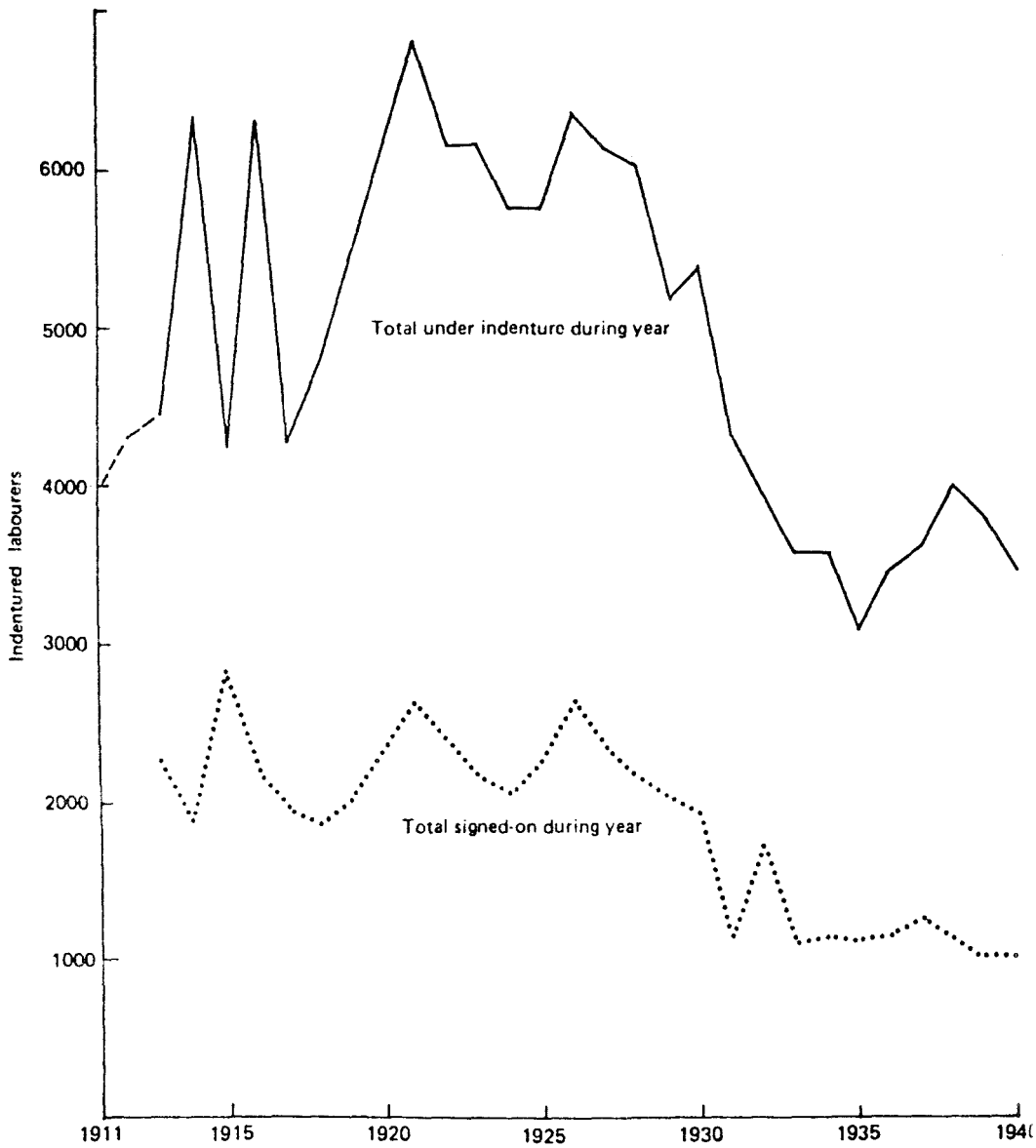

Figure 2. Indentured labourers on Solomon Islands plantations, c. 1911-1940.

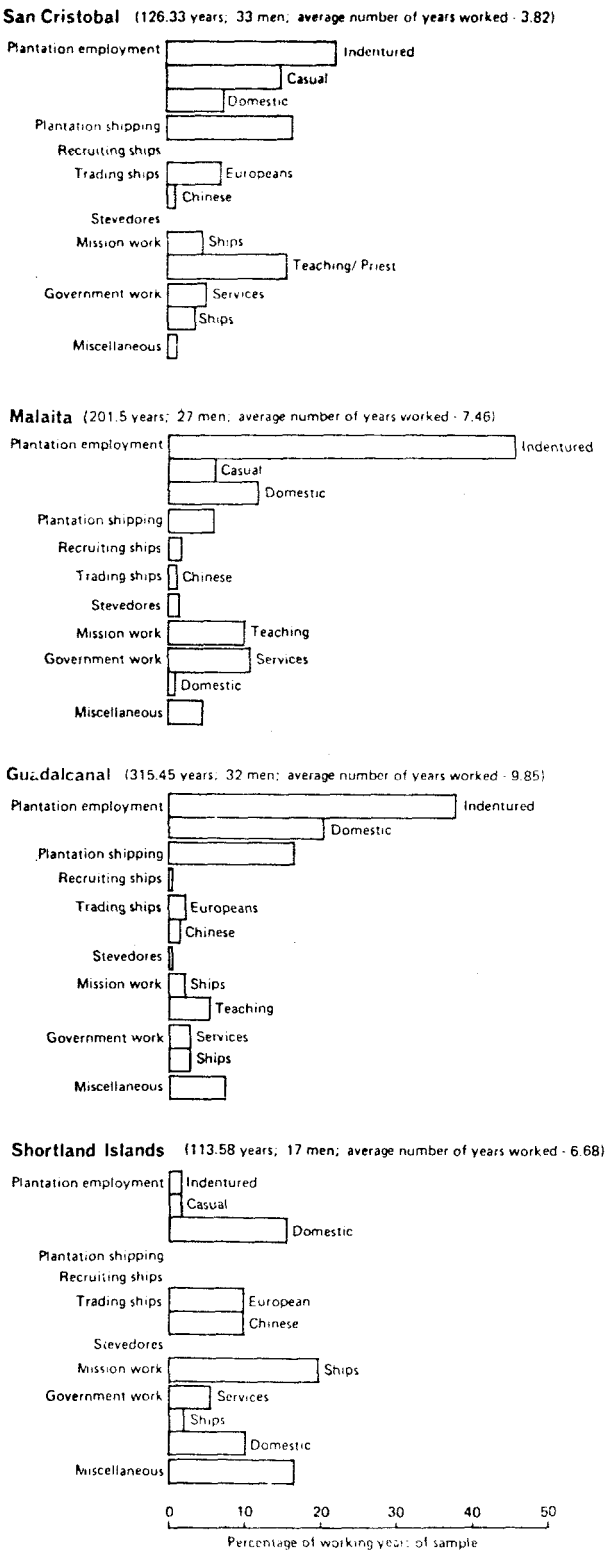

Figure 3. Employment patterns of male informants from San Cristobal, Malaita, Guadalcanal and the Shortland Islands.

Usefulness of Data from Oral Testimony

To assess this a few examples from the information gained from interviews will be examined. These examples with the experiences of men and women on plantations and in other paid employment away from the village will be discussed under the three specific categories:

1. Oral evidence the only source available.

Surviving government. records on labour recruitment provide only the total number of men under indenture each year and the number signing on each year (Figure 2), along with the total signing on from each island. There are no statistics to calculate overall labour mobility, especially in non-plantation work, or the total number of years men spent in paid employment away from their villages.

Using the information collected from informants (Figure 3) it can be seen that:

(a) The men from Guadalcanal and Malaita spent a large proportion of the most productive years of their lives away from the village. Although the Shortland Islanders spent almost as much time in paid employment as the Guadalcanal sample, they were either employed near their villages, or the owners of the ships on which they worked lived in the Shortland area. Thus, their involvement in village society was maintained.

(b) Shortland Islanders worked in a greater variety of tasks and developed a larger range of skills than all other groups in the sample.

(c) Most Malaitans in this sample were formerly bushmen. This meant they were usually pagan and therefore fearful of female pollution. This explains their comparatively low level of domestic employment in European households. Moreover, when they had domestic employment on the plantation it was usually with a bachelor European. Being bushmen, they also had little knowledge of the sea and sea-craft, could not swim and hence rarely sought employment on ships.

(d) San Gristobal men were discouraged by their elders and bigmen from seeking a second contract after the initial period. This

prohibition was sustained by the availability of casual labour on the plantations of non-company, individual European planters who treated their labour fairly. The one-contract trend among the San Cristobal men and their frequent initial ignorance of Pidgin meant there were few opportunities for them to be offered domestic work since this was usually offered to promising Pidgin-speaking field hands on the company plantations. Domestic positions on local San Cristobal plantations were filled by women from the neighbourhood. There were no opportunities for local casual labour on Guadalcanal, and very few on Malaita where the sole plantation company was not a popular employer among neighbouring Malaitans.

This kind of quantitative material, together with other qualitative information, provided a basis for later generalizations about the social and political repercussion of the labourers' experience in the colonial economy. This experience was influenced by social, economic, ecological and geographical factors specific to certain groups. Such information was unavailable in the written records. Certainly, some of the wider conclusions might have still been drawn from the written records alone, but never with the same degree of confidence and sensitivity to local variations.

2. Oral evidence reinforcing other evidence.

(a) In the years 1921-23 the government imposed a head-tax on adult males. Part of the rationale behind this was to increase the number of labourers available for plantations. This had only a marginal effect on the numbers employed because the ceiling for available labour had already been reached. Thus, it could be argued that the tax was not an incentive for men to seek work. Only a few records indicate that it was an incentive to some men and significantly enough, the oral evidence supports this. The primary reasons for many men to seek employment was to earn enough money not simply for their tax, but for the tax for all their male relatives between sixteen and sixty who were at home and with no other means of earning money. Before 1922 wage-labour had been a means of getting a few necessities and extra comforts for the labourer and his relatives. There had always been some element of community support. However, with the tax there was now a strong obligation to work exerted on the young.

(b) The oral evidence also confirmed the widespread use of violence against and by labourers. Both kinds of evidence--oral and documentary--revealed that despite its legal prohibition planters used violence against the men. This generally was accepted provided that the labourer concerned was in the wrong and knew it, and that the violence committed did not cause serious physical harm. But the informants had proportionately more to say than the documents about the labourers' use of violence to rectify an injustice. It is probable that many such occasions went unnoted in the documentation either because the European did not like to admit he had been bested or, more commonly, because the labourers had "set-up" the European so that their attack on him would look like self-defence to a magistrate.

3. Oral evidence revealing different perspectives and perceptions of events.

(a) In their recorded assessments of pre-war Solomon Islanders, contemporary Europeans, with a few notable exceptions, reveal to the historian far more about their own racial attitudes than the personalities of the Solomon Islanders. In the written records Islanders emerge as docile, rebellious, stupid, cunning, lazy, inferior, arrogant, filthy, superstitious, childish, morose, careless and so on. Such a list is indicative of the colonialists' image of those they oppress. But does this colonial racism exist only in the eye of the historian, or were its behavioral correlates realities for Solomon Islanders? Again and again the oral evidence shows it was very real for them. Old Shortland Islands men remember how a district officer there used to demand that the people wash their coins for the tax before presentation to him. If he touched dirty money or shook hands with a Shortland Islander he would wash his hands where all could see. Men told of how throughout the Protectorates, government officers demanded Solomon Islanders address them as "Sir." A San Cristobal crewman on the government ship lost his job because he kept a pipe in his mouth while speaking to the government officer. A very old Guadalcanal man remarked on the inequity of a system that hanged a Solomon Islander for killing a European yet permitted the European killer of a Solomon Islands plantation labourer to leave for Sydney on the next steamer.

(b) Turning to another example: the labourers' traditional religious and social framework gave them a different perception of "death from illness" to that of their "master." In order to protect themselves from illness and other material and non-material dangers, pagans frequently brought to the plantation some relic or item closely associated with their ancestral spirit's shrine in their home area. They would hide this article in the roof of the labourers' house, or in the bush adjacent to the plantation and pray to this spirit in time of need and religious worship. This belief in the involvement of the ancestral spirits, so common in Melanesia, frames the Solomon Islanders' perceptions of many events. For instance, when a labourer died on the plantation in the 1930s, the European medical opinion was that death was due to the *beriberi* caused by a diet consisting almost entirely of polished rice (thiamine deficiency). The man's friends thought differently. They knew he had failed to make a propitiatory offering to his ancestor before leaving home to work on the plantation. This was his punishment.

(c) Nor was it simply a matter of European-Solomon Islander dichotomy in perspective and values, as the oral evidence proved. Pagan male Malaitans have many prohibitions to prevent themselves from being polluted by females. Thus the Malaitan "boss-boi" at one plantation forced the wife of a Guadalcanal man to go deep into the bush to give birth, to avoid any contamination of the Malaitan labourers' living quarters. With no advance preparations for such a birth the woman lost the child. To defy the Malaitans and protect the woman during her next confinement the planter allowed her to use his house near the labour compound and refused to re-hire the "boss-boi" at the end of his contract. This pagan Malaitan attitude to women was viewed with distaste by Christian Guadalcanal men who had long before abandoned such beliefs. This value conflict between labourers on plantations where there were some women with their husbands, was often the cause of many disputes and fights which planters simply attributed to "woman trouble."

CONCLUSION

For several years now oral sources have been used to complement the written documentation. Moreover, the historical calendar technique for

dating is an old one and is extensively used by demographers. It can be applied to a variety of events described in all types of oral testimony besides the specific case outlined in this discussion.

The technique of sampling, which forms the basis of my methodology with the histories of Solomon Islanders, is the technique of samplings so favoured by sociologists. It is in fact a sociological method applied to the past rather than the present. Questionnaire construction and part of the pre-testing was done from the documentation. By using a consistent set of questions focused around a number of major topics, data were obtained that were comparable both on a quantitative and qualitative level. However, this technique does have its limitations. The researcher is tied very closely to the basic format, although, of course, there is no ban on supplementary information. Moreover, in gaining the breadth of vision inherent in comparative studies, one sacrifices the fine grain of the variation within a small community, something which would be of more interest to the anthropologist or either the local-area or tribal historian. But while this is an acknowledged sacrifice it is one which was made quite purposely because of the time-place scope of the original research. My study was a macro-history and thus the methods used were appropriate to the level of generalization intended. It was a method of particular value in analyzing the variety of experiences and responses to a common process in the cross-cultural context and would be applicable to investigating the processes of wage-labour, village relocation, missionization or cash cropping, of so much interest to the Pacific historian.*

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NOTES

1. Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of Trade, Plantations and Society in the Solomon Islands. c. 1800-1942.* Ph.D., ANU, 1979.

2. J. W. Davidson, “Problems of Pacific History.” *Journal of Pacific History*, 1 (1966), 5: H. E. Maude, “Pacific History--Past, Present and Future,” *Journal of Pacific History*, VI (1971), 7.

3. This deficiency has not been remedied by a forthcoming publication edited by D. J. Denoon. and R. Lacey, *Theory and Practice of Oral History in Melanesia*, publication date 1981 (Personal commnication, R. Lacey, October 1980).

4. Judith A. Bennett, "Population Distribution and Village Relocation 1870-1950," in Murray Chapman and Peter Pirie (eds), *Tasi Mauri: A Report on Population and Resources of Guadalcanal Weather Coast,* East-West Population Institute and University of Hawaii (Honolulu 1974), Chapter 2, *Cross Cultural Influences on Village Relocation on the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, c. 1870-1953,* M.A., University of Hawaii, 1973.

5. C. Scott and G. Sabagh, "The Historical Calendar as a Method of Estimating Age: The Experience of the Moroccan Multi-purpose Sample Survey of 1961-63," *Population Studies, A Journal of Demography,* XXIV (1970), 94. This "historical calendar" method was used originally as a field technique in 1865 by Oldenfield working among the Australian Aborigines. (Ibid., 93).

6. *The National Times,* Sydney, Australia, 13-19 July 1980, 43.

APPENDIX 1

Experience of men and women on plantations and in other paid employment away from village.

With the basic set of questions there are additional sets that were used, depending on the nature of the answer to a preceding question. Only a few examples are given and are indicated by square brackets.

A. 1. When you first left your village where did you go?
2. When you finished this what did you do next?
(Asked as many times as required)
3. So, you came back to . . . and you stayed there? Are you sure you had no other work or stays away from the village after this?
(If negative, sequence is complete)

B. 1. When you went first to . . . plantation, what boat did you travel on?
2. Where did you board the ship?
3. What was the name of the captain?
4. Did he give you or your relatives any presents or money?
5. If so, what and how much?
[What did you do with this money?]
6. Did anyone else go with you?
[How many and who were they?]
7. Were you married or single?
[If married, what was wife's attitude to work away from home for two years?]
8. How did your parents and other relatives feel about this?

9. Why did you go to work on the plantation?
10. Where did you sign on?
11. How did you travel from there to the plantation?
12. Name of ship and captain?
13. Name of government officer who witnessed indenture?
14. When you left home who was the government district officer on your island?

C. 1. What kind of work did you do on the plantation?
2. Did you know how to do this work before you came to the plantation?
[Who showed you how to do this job?]
3. How many years did you stay?
4. What was the plantation manager's name?
5. What was the "boss-boi's" name?
6. Where did he come from?
7. How did you talk to him and men from other islands?
[Where did you learn to speak Pidgin?]
8. How many men were working on the plantation?
9. How many from Malaita, Guadalcanal and San Cristobal?
10. Were there men from any other islands working there?
11. How many?
12. Did any groups just do one task (e.g. husking) or were those involved on the one task a mix of men from different islands?

D. 1. When you arrived at the plantation did you receive any blankets, mosquito nets, soap or anything like that?
2. What kind of a house did you sleep in?
3. Were the men in it all from the one island?
4. What did you eat and drink for breakfast/lunch/dinner?
5. How many times a week did you eat meat or fish, tinned or fresh?
6. When did you start and finish work?
7. Where did you eat?
8. Who prepared the food?

E. 1. What was your "master" like to work for?
2. Was he a good "master" or bad one?
[Who did he punish/hit? When? How did men react? What did "master do?]
3. Was there ever a serious quarrel or disagreement with the master?
[What was the cause of this?]

4. Did government inspectors visit the plantation?
   [How often? What exactly did they do? Did they question the men separately or with the master present? Did the men complain of anything? What did the inspector do about complaints? Were his orders carried out by the "master"? Did your "master" ever have to go to court because of these complaints? What happened there?]
5. If anyone got sick what happened to them?
6. What kind of medicines did you get?
7. Did any men die on the plantation?
8. What caused their death?

F. 1. On Saturdays and Sundays did you work?
2. On Saturday did the "master" or the "boss-boi" give you any extra rations?
3. If yes, (tobacco, matches and soap), what quantity?
4. Did everyone get the same amount?
5. What did you do on Saturday afternoon?
6. What did you do on Sunday?
7. Did you know or talk with any local village people?
   [How did you first get to know them? Did you or any of the other labourers exchange fresh vegetables and betel nut from local villagers? What did you give them? How were you able to talk with them? Were they Christians? Were you a Christian then? Did you ever "lotu" with them? Were there any arguments with villagers? What caused these fights? Did any of your group marry a local village woman?]
8. Did the plantation have a store where a man could buy things?

G. 1. Were you on friendly terms with any labourers not from your own island?
2. Were there fights between different groups of labourers or between individuals?
3. What caused these fights?
4. Did any married men bring wives?
5. Were there any arguments because of the presence of women?
6. Why did most married men leave their wives at home?
7. Did any men not from your island ever come to your place for a visit at the end of their contract?

H. 1. When you finished your first contract, why did you (didn't you) sign back?

2. Where did you sign off and get paid?
   [If at Tulagi, the capital: How long did you stay there? Where did you stay? Who supplied your food? Did you visit Chinatown? Where did you buy your things? Why did you buy at . . .? Was there any trouble while you were at Tulagi? What was the cause of this?]
3. How did you return home?
4. Name of ship and captain?
5. When you arrived home how did your family and friends react?
6. What goods did you bring home?
7. What did you do with those things?

APPENDIX II

Sample Personal Testimony transcribed from field notes (excerpt only)

Dickie P . . . of Ghaliatu, Malageti, (coastal village), South Guadalcanal.

Work sequence: He went to Baunani for two years as a "new chum." Back to Ghaliatu for six months and then to Yandina for two years. He next went as crew on the vessel, *Royal Endeavour,* for eight years. Returned home for one year following which he worked on BP's *Mindaro* for one year, based at Makambo. Was "boss crew." Came back to Ghaliatu for about ten years. His next employment was on the Chinese ship *Namunini* for six months. He returned home. During this time Mr. Allen of Ruavatu set up a village store at Ghaliatu with Dickie in charge. He worked in this store for one-and-one-half years. Mr. Allen got sick and went home and his successor, Mr. Warren, took back the goods and closed the store. He stayed home during the war.

Experience: He left Ghaliatu for Baunani because he wanted to see new things. This was before the tax was imposed. David Sango was still alive. Government officer at Aola was Mr. Norris. He went away in the recruiting boat, *Kumbara,* with Captain Poole in charge. It was Poole who asked him if he wanted to work. Five others went also from Ghaliatu. Prior to this others had been to Baunani, returned and some had died.

Poole told him he would get two shillings and six pence a week as wages or twelve pounds for a two year contract, Poole gave "presents" to Dickie's clan--a small knife, pipe, tobacco, calico, matches and a spoon. His parents and family were upset at his departure, but when the recruit-

er was ready to leave he simply raced for the dinghy and jumped in. The "beach pay" was delivered to his family on shore after he was on board the recruiter's ship. He was taken to Tulagi where he signed on in front of Mr. Bell. On the plantation he was employed in brushing and catching beetles. Coconut palms were still young at this time. Plantation boss was Jack Ireland or Jack Allen. Master was fair. Housing for labourers was a leaf building, on ground, no stumps. Worked from about 6 a.m.-11 a.m., lunch 11 a.m.-l p.m., worked 1 p.m.-5 p.m. On Saturday worked from dawn 'til lunch time.

Food: 2 hard biscuits and tea in morning. Meat was given out twice a week, but no fresh vegetables. He was satisfied with the ration.

There was a good deal of minor sickness--fever, diarrhea, coughs. Master gave medicines for these. If a man was very sick he was allowed to rest in the house.

On plantation Mr. Allen left and Mr. Latter (Laka?) came. The labourers were from Malaita, Makira (San Cristobal) and Guadalcanal. There were only a handful from Makira. There was no fighting among the lahour. Some of the labourers were "mission" (i.e. Christian). Baunani was near a mission station and the missionaries would visit on Sundays. The missionaries included Miss Cronau, Louversen, Miss Dick, Miss Calvin.

The villages near Baunani were led by Aliki and Boisave, and they were friendly. However, in those days the plantation owners had to set a guard against the bushmen who tried to shoot the labourers. The government did nothing about this although there was a government officer at Aoke, Mr. Campbell.

The "boss-bois" were Hari Panatovatova, Peter Konina (Guadalcanal man), Willy (Malaita man). Boisave was big man of local village, Baunani. He and Aliki negotiated between plantation and bush people. Labourers obtained vegetables and betel nut from villages on Saturday and Sunday, There were a few women on plantation, the wives of Makira and Malaita men.

Before he came to plantation he spoke no Pidgin, At the plantation the white men use Pidgin to talk with labour. As some Ghaliatu men were already on the plantation they helped him learn Pidgin, Some of the men in his own recruitment group had already been to this plantation.

Mr. Campbell came to inspect the plantation every six months. He lined up the men and asked them if the food was adequate, tobacco issue correct, pipes, matches correct and so on. No one ever ran away from plantation because they would only get into the bush which was full of pagans. If anyone complained about conditions Mr. Campbell checked

with master. Despite this, when Campbell had gone, the master sometimes withheld rations of tobacco (non-food) if men did not obey him.

The plantation had a store which opened every day and was run by a European, Mr. Tale or Dave. Store goods include calico, pipes, tinned meat and fish. In those days one could buy 6 pieces of tobacco for a shilling, calico was one shilling a fathom, pipes 6 for one shilling. Money that was spent in store was deducted from pay every three months when pound wages, were advanced and other money held.

No one gambled in spare time, the mission saw to this. Some men spent money in stores, others did not. At this time there were no Chinese traders in the area, being found only at Tulagi.

When he finished at Baunani he went to Aola to sign off. There was a store on a nearby island, Mbara--it belonged to the same company which owned the plantation on Malaita. He signed off in front of the government officer then went and purchased his things. He bought a knife, axes and other things including a big box. These were for his "Chinese" [clan elder] and parents. The storeman was Mr. Cambridge, but the big boss was Mr. Banner. The *Ruana* was the company ship that brought him from Baunani to Aola and then the *Royal Endeavour* under Capt. Poole brought him back home.

When he returned all the people were glad to see him. Although he liked village life he wanted to see new places. Regarding Yandina he wanted to see what it was like as he had heard about it at Baunani.

The *Royal Endeavour* took men from Ghaliatu, Inakona, Malageti, Talise, Koloiula. Beach pay was similar to before. At Yandina he drove a cart pulled by cattle which carried copra and coconuts. The "master" Mr. McKinnon taught him how to do this. The manager at Yandina was Millhouse. He was married. Manager was a good man. There was one master at Lakeru called Mr. Jacky and another [overseer] at Sivoli. The labour told Millhouse that Mr. Jacky treated them badly, beating some of them with a *loia* cane, so he was sacked. This happened with another European.

The Malaitan labourers would fight over any little thing, especially if someone swore at them in Pidgin.

Summary

Using this and the rest of transcript the following table was drawn up:

Job	Place	Duration	Interval	Duration
Brushing and catching beetles	Baunani	2 years	Home	6 months
Drove cart	Yandina	2 years	Home	1 year
Crewman, later in engine room	*Royal Endeavour*		8 years	
boss crew	*Mindaro* (BP)	1 year	Home	10 years
boss crew	*Naminini* (Chinese)	6 months	Home	
Village Storeman	Ghaliatu (home)	1½ years	Home	

This man was in paid employment for fifteen years. Of that, thirteen and a half were spent away from home. This and similar information from other informants became the basis for statistics used to compare the Guadalcanal group with those of other areas (see Figure 3).

Dating from calendar and other information: Norris served only a short term on Guadalcanal, but he was active. He was at Aola in 1915. David Sango was alive in the 1920s, but the *Kumbara* registration record puts the date as before 1920. The year 1915 is also confirmed by reference to Mr. Campbell as an officer on Malaita, where he was officer in command of Police for only that year. Thus Dickie would have left the plantation in late 1917 or early 1918. Calendar for this period shows that there were many complaints regarding ineffectiveness of government and in that year bushmen fired upon the watchmen at Baunani. The Company was owned by members of a famous missionary-planter family in Queensland, the Youngs. This missionary body, the South Sea Evangelical Mission, based operation on Malaita at Su‘u, adjacent to Baunani. This explains the influence the mission had on the running of the plantation. Miss Deck was one of the leading missionaries.

On the plantation there was a Mr. Davis who at times also managed a neighbouring plantation. At this period also the Company was told to improve its labour accommodation.

Rmarks: Both throughout the excerpt quoted and in the rest of his testimony, Dickie P. revealed a very accurate recall of names, people, places, events which matched with the documentation. This, along with cross checking from the data of other informants, made me feel confident that he was a reliable informant on matters which were not specifically documented--e.g. tobacco ration being stopped as a punishment, the mediating activities of Aliki and Boisave, the lack of gambling, the goods brought home, his parents' and clan's attitudes, the time he was employed in the village and so on.