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"THE NEW HEBRIDEAN IS EVERYWHERE": THE OCEANIAN LABOR TRADE TO NEW CALEDONIA, 1865-1930

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Although the Oceanian labor trade has been fairly intensively studied since the Second World War, the New Caledonian sector of it has been neglected, apparently because of the dearth of systematic official records dealing with the subject. But by piecing together fragments from a variety of sources I have been able to trace its basic features. From 1865 to 1930, about fourteen thousand indentured laborers were imported into the French colony from other Pacific islands, overwhelmingly from the then New Hebrides (Vanuatu), but also from the Solomon Islands, with a few from the Gilberts (Kiribati). Although, as elsewhere, young men in the prime of life were the preferred recruits, about 10 percent of the laborers were women, and many young children were also indentured. Some recruits were kidnaped, some volunteered for a variety of reasons, and some left their home islands in response to local constraints. The recruits to New Caledonia worked in a greater variety of occupations than those who went to other places. Conditions of labor were harsh and state supervision was slack. The death rate among workers was very high. Indentured laborers were entitled, under certain conditions, to reside in the colony after eight years of continuous service, and many did. What happened to those who stayed and those who returned to their homeland remains to be studied.

FROM THE 1860s until the early twentieth century, many thousands of Oceanians were shipped from their homes to work as indentured laborers for Europeans, generally for an initial period of three to five years. Most of them were taken to the British colony of Queensland in Australia, but significant numbers also went to Fiji, Hawai'i, Tahiti, Western Samoa, and New Caledonia. This traffic, known as the Pacific Island or Oceanian labor trade, aroused immense controversy during its lifetime, a debate driven largely by a humanitarian concern that it was a disguised renewal of the slave trade.

Only since the Second World War has the movement received scholarly attention from historians,[1] and, with notable exceptions, it remains largely ignored by anthropologists.[2]

Research interest has naturally tended to center on the larger movements to Queensland and Fiji, although interesting small studies have appeared on Hawai'i and Samoa. Yet to account for the fact that--at last count[3]--240 works have appeared on the Queensland episode, while almost no study at all has been devoted to a similar movement to the French territories, requires more explanation than the greater size of the former. After having been engaged for more than ten years in a study of the Oceanian labor trade to New Caledonia, I am no longer mystified by the discrepancy The subject is much more difficult to research. Accessible Immigration Department files and official registers that exist in Fiji and Queensland listing the name, estimated age, place of origin, and other details of the imported Oceanians have no counterpart in New Caledonia. Although such records must at some time have existed, they do not appear in the archives either in France or in the territory, except for occasional years or as estimates in official reports.[4] It was necessary to reconstruct the basic data, adding the numbers of arrivals and departures from reports in the shipping columns of local newspapers over the whole period,[5] searching references in court records and official correspondence, scanning the acts of the ***état civil*** (Register of Births, Marriages, and Deaths) for foreign Oceanians whose origin, estimated age, (less often) registration number, and (rarely) date of arrival and ship might be given.[6] This arduous process had to be completed before I could establish the volume and time frame of the trade and begin the normal process of research and interpretation.[7] Within the scope of this article, I outline some of my conclusions regarding the length and volume of the trade and remark on the age, gender, and origin of the workers with a brief reference to their employment and the conditions under which they were recruited and worked.

The Labor Trade

The systematic importation of Oceanian labor into New Caledonia began in 1865, roughly the same time as the movements to Queensland and Fiji, but it was to outlast both of these. Although the trade peaked between 1874 and 1894, a modest but steady intake continued throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, with dwindling numbers arriving up to the onset of the Great Depression of 1929-1931. There were officially two interruptions in the flow--a suspension of nearly two years between June 1882 and February 1884, and a longer ban of five years between March 1885 and March

1890--but in fact Oceanian labor continued to arrive during the second suspension regardless of the formal prohibition.[8]

No fewer than fourteen thousand Oceanians arrived to work in New Caledonia in the period between 1865 and 1925; twelve thousand of them came before the end of the nineteenth century.[9] These workers were often known to the whites by the generic term of "New Hebrideans" ***(néo-hébridais)*** or simply "Hebrideans," and indeed, more than 90 percent of them came from the then New Hebrides, Banks, and Torres Islands, which now form the state of Vanuatu, only a few days' sail from New Caledonia. The total includes about a thousand, however, from the Solomon Islands and probably fewer than a hundred from the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati).[10] To encompass all these people and to distinguish them from the indigenous Melanesians, one would have to use a lengthy rubric. I will continue to use the term "New Hebrideans" for this class of migrant worker for the sake of convenience, but it has to be understood to include those from the other islands mentioned above.

The number of so-called Hebrideans present at any one time is extremely difficult to calculate exactly, given their comings and goings and a high death rate among them. In the peak years there were probably close to three thousand at one time, and between the years 1874 and 1894 the figure hardly ever fell below two thousand present each year.[11] As an official report said in 1883, "The New Hebridean is everywhere and few houses are without them."[12] The figure of the Hebridean was a familiar one in the landscape of nineteenth-century New Caledonia: no traveler's tale was complete without a reference--usually jocular--to the "labor boys" who carried their boxes, rowed them ashore, disported themselves on the Place des Cocotiers on Sundays, or whom they observed working on the plantations and at the mines.[13] So it is quite remarkable how this most visible character of the period has now been forgotten in the territory itself, perhaps overshadowed by a later large influx of Asian workers.[14] And, with the notable exception of Pierre Gascher,[15] who gave a useful outline of the employment of imported Oceanians until 1894, modern Pacific historians give them but a passing mention, if any at all.[16]

Nevertheless, these workers formed the backbone of the labor force in the development of the French colony in the nineteenth century. In 1901, they still outnumbered the combined total of Asian ***engagés,*** and by then numbers more of them would also have been working in New Caledonia without contracts, having completed the requisite eight years of engagement before being entitled to become "free residents." They were, however, themselves outnumbered in the same year by indentured local Kanaks, most of them Loyalty Islanders,[17] whom the government finally succeeded in

recruiting through the progressive imposition through the 1890s of a head tax, forcing them to earn cash. Their history also remains to be written.

Profile of the Recruits

The earliest imported Oceanians came from the southern islands of the New Hebrides that were already familiar to the sandalwood traders, and it was a former sandalwood trader, Andrew Henry, who brought the first convoys under government contract.[18] But in the 1870s the labor trade had shifted to the northern islands of the group and to the Banks and Torres Islands; the bulk of the recruits thereafter came from these islands. There were several recruiting voyages to the Solomon Islands before 1890--one as early as 1870 that was certainly a kidnaping affair--and a couple to the Gilbert Islands. After 1890 the Solomon Islands was fairly regularly visited, even after it became a British colony in 1893, but the group was finally closed to external recruiting at the end of 1911.[19] A more unlikely source of labor was developed between 1892 and 1912--a return to the southern New Hebridean island of Tanna, which had been more or less off the recruiters' list since the beginning of the 1880s. Yet as late as 1912 more than a hundred Tannese were recruited for work in New Caledonia,[20] something that requires explanation.

A young man in his prime, about eighteen to twenty-four years of age, was the worker considered most desirable by recruiters on behalf of employers. But because there were no restrictions on the ways in which New Hebrideans were employed, as there were, for example, in Queensland, women and children were also sought for what was considered appropriate work. Women were sought for domestic service and field work--often a combination of both--and also, it seems, worked in the mines, as indeed French women were still doing. In a colonial society with more than the usual preponderance of unattached males, female workers were without a doubt also sought as concubines. An indentured domestic in the household of a single man often became his bedmate, and female workers were used to attract and keep overseers or valued male ***engagés.***[21] Some women enlisted with a husband or partner in the first place and worked as a ménage. Women were difficult to recruit, mainly because the menfolk in their homeland were usually unwilling to let them go. Many of them, indeed, were runaways (a fascinating story in itself that, unfortunately, would take too much space to elaborate here). Although they were recruited more freely in some periods and from some islands than others, overall women formed probably no more than 10 percent of the total number of recruits.

An unusual feature of the trade was the high proportion of very young recruits. For the first fifteen years of the labor trade to New Caledonia, the minimum legal age for recruits was fixed at six years (their age always being an estimate).[22] At the end of 1880, a commission of inquiry recommended that the minimum age be increased by two years.[23] Government agents' instructions appear to have been amended accordingly by 1884, when recruiting was resumed after the first suspension, but no new requirement appeared in the regulations until the decree of 1893,[24] in which a provision forbade the recruiting of children of less than 110 centimeters in height, later reckoned at about nine years of age; by 1904 the minimum age for an unaccompanied recruit was still only ten years, or a height of 114 centimeters.[25] To Rear Admiral Amédée Courbet, governor of New Caledonia (1880-l882), "one of the saddest aspects of this kind of operation" was the large number of child workers imported; he quoted as an example the first two convoys of 1882, of which nearly 40 percent were children under sixteen.[26] The proportion was probably even higher in the 1870s.[27]

Why were so many children recruited when the ideal choice was someone in the prime of life? Part of the answer was an extraordinary provision in the labor regulations that allowed children to be indentured not for three to five years, like the other recruits, but until the attainment of their majority,[28] which meant that they might be kept for ten years or even longer. A loophole like that was bound to be exploited. Although children made quite useful workers, they became more valuable as they grew older and stronger, and could even be traded off for a profit. In addition, it was said, not only were children easier to entice or to kidnap,[29] but also their relatives were sometimes willing to exchange them for coveted trade goods.[30]

Children were employed at the nickel mines, sorting nickel at the mine face, and in the fields, doing odd jobs such as chasing grasshoppers on the sugar plantations at Dumbea, but the most common employment for young children was as house servants, particularly nursemaids. Several settlers commented with surprise on how well they kept the house in order and especially on how well they cared for infants, "better than do most nursemaids in France," as one said.[31]

Recruitment Practices

The French labor trade, like the British trade, was never entirely free from kidnaping. The use of force and fraud in recruiting, however, was proportionally greater in the former, not because the French were less humane than the British--indeed many of their recruiters were in fact British--but because the French policing of recruiting was much inferior to the British.

There were no government agents on French recruiting ships until 1875--five years after British recruiters were compelled to carry them--and little supervision of these until the French navy began to patrol the New Hebrides under the Joint Naval Commission of 1887, whereas the British trade had been policed by the Royal Navy since 1872. Even after 1887 there was usually only one French naval vessel in these waters compared with several British ships,[32] and the French commanders had powers inferior to their British counterparts, as they continually complained.[33] Widespread abuses eventually received official attention in 1880, when a commission of inquiry--sparked by complaints from the British consul--revealed that nearly all the labor voyages out of Noumea in that year had engaged in kidnaping.[34] The revelations became the overt reason for the first suspension of labor recruiting in the islands in 1882.[35] In spite of stricter control when recruiting resumed, there were complaints of kidnaping as late as 1911.[36]

After the labor trade to New Caledonia became familiar to islanders, however, most recruits were obtained without the use of force on the part of the European crews, just as they were in the British sector of the trade. New Hebrideans were often waiting on the beach or even sometimes swam out to the ship in order to sign on. Why were they ready to leave their homeland for years of hard work in a foreign country? The question has been too often raised in relation to the motivation of individual recruits;[37] while this is appropriate in the case of runaways, who left without community consent, normally islanders young enough to be interesting to recruiters would not take a decision to leave the country on their own account. When recruits were waiting on the beach to sign on, the question would already have been much discussed by the senior men in the community; they would have decided among themselves how many young men or boys, if any, they could spare to offer to the next labor ship and precisely who they would be, just as in later days it was discussed and decided who would go away to earn the tax money that was levied on the community. The desires of the young men in question might be a factor in the decision, but so also might the obligations of one family to another: there were reciprocal obligations to fulfill that were a form of debt, and the "creditors" had a strong hold over those under obligation to them.

One has to ask why parents or local community leaders were prepared to offer recruits. As elsewhere, the chief reason was the prospect of wealth in the form of desired trade goods: there was the immediate payment on the beach to the kin supposed to have authority over the recruit and the goods brought back to the island by the workers, representing their earnings over their term of labor. So far as the beach payment was concerned, special temptation existed when it became a Snider rifle for an adult male recruit,

as it did in the New Caledonian trade, especially after 1884, when such a payment was forbidden to the British trade, giving the French colony a competitive edge. The desire for Snider rifles seems to be the reason for the renewed interest in recruiting for the labor trade in Tanna, in the 1890s mentioned above: during this period, there was frequent warfare in Tanna, and firearms were at a premium.[38] Other highly valued goods might put pressure on a community to offer recruits, but sometimes the item sought was traditional; in the northern New Hebrides pigs were necessary for traditional rank-taking ceremonies, and in 1885 the recruiter of one ship, the ***Marie,*** was promised recruits if he would bring four boars from another island.[39] Sometimes communities were forced to offer recruits as a result of natural disasters. Many of the Pacific islands are frequently subject to them: floods, droughts, and above all cyclones can wipe out the years food supply so that people are starving. In such a situation recruiters expected and got a windfall of "volunteers" recruiting simply in order to stay alive.[40]

In the case of runaways who left without the consent of their community, the reasons--insofar as European observers could determine them--were individual and varied greatly: the lure of adventure, escape from a difficult situation at home, the hope of improving status, or simply because one's friends had decided to go--the sorts of reasons that sometimes motivate people to join the army.

Employment of Recruits

The employment of the New Hebrideans was much more varied than in Queensland and Fiji. In the earliest days of colonization (and even before) there had been New Hebrideans working in New Caledonia in the sandalwood and béche-de-mer trades,[41] and in the 1850s on a property in Mont Dore.[42] But when Governor Charles Guillain (1861-1870) decided in 1865 to import them on a large scale, it was partly to answer the needs of the administration. Already in difficulties trying to raise sufficient labor for the most basic of public works, the administration had a desperate need for its own supply of cheap labor when shiploads of convicts began arriving in 1864: buildings had to be erected, the convicts had to be housed, fed, guarded, and rowed to the mainland from the island chosen as their quarters, Ile Nou. The administration did not have enough control over the indigenous Melanesian population to exact a continuous labor supply from this source and was not to have for many years to come. Only short-term corvées from nearby tribes were possible.[43]

As well, Guillain was strongly in favor of the development of the country by private settlers, in the usual forlorn hope of colonizers that private devel-

opment would eventually meet the cost of public expenditure on administration. He was therefore bound to help such settlers procure a supply of cheap labor. He had actively encouraged the emigration of a group of planters from Réunion to develop the sugarcane industry in New Caledonia. The first cohort of Réunionnais had arrived in 1864; they had imported their own Indian laborers, but found them insufficient to work their large plantations. Under the aegis of Guillain, coffee plantations, cattle runs, and other agricultural enterprises were also set up in these early, hopeful days, and all demanded cheap, servile labor in order to compete on world markets.

The earliest convoys of New Hebrideans therefore went mainly to the administration or to agricultural enterprises. For the government they worked as convict guards, boat's crew for the penal administration and the Port Authority, ship hands on the coastal shipping service, which was virtually the sole means of communicating with the interior, and at the government workshop.[44] Later they worked in the telegraph service. Private settlers employed them as field hands on sugar and coffee plantations and cattle runs, and as barge crew for river transport of their produce, while they also were used as crew on private trading or fishing vessels.

Although it was not part of Governor Guillain's plan, they were also engaged from the very beginning as house servants, in Noumea and also in the bush. And in spite of the stated intention of using them to develop the agricultural potential of the interior, other kinds of urban employment absorbed a large number of these workers throughout the period: as laborers on the wharves, carrying loads to stores, in the stores themselves, and as laborers, waiters, and rouseabouts in hotels and bars--always a much larger industry than in the British colonies.[45]

From 1873 there was a change in the pattern of the use of their labor as a result of the beginning of mining. As the British colonial secretary pointed out in April 1874, the mine owners "had already channelled such an inexpensive labor force on to their mines."[46] The development of mining also led to a large upsurge in the numbers recruited in the islands from 1873 on and increased competition for labor, causing a rise in the so-called passage money, the price of hiring a contracted laborer, over the decade 1874-1884. As a result, smaller employers were increasingly hard-pressed to maintain or renew their supply of labor, and some indeed considered that they had paid enough when they paid the inflated passage money, and simply did not and at times could not pay wages to the workers.[47]

Workers destined for the mines were sent on by sea first to the "Fern Hill" gold mine, then to the copper mine in the Diahot region near Ouégoa in the northeast, then to the first nickel mines in Thio, Canala, Kouaoua, and Houailou in the southeast and south to Mont Dore, to Walpole Island

and the Chesterfield Islands to dig phosphate, and later to the mines of the northwest.[48] Gangs of laborers did the heavy work of clearing the site, excavating, and making the road or tram track for the transport of the mineral to the coast. Once the mine was in operation, New Hebridean laborers were at first used to dig the ore, but as death from "chest complaints" claimed an alarming number of them, the tendency throughout the 1880s was to employ them only at surface works. At the surface they sorted the ore and put it into sacks--work that was often done by quite young boys--and loaded the sacks onto wagons that others either pushed or pulled along a tramway to the wharf.[49]

But Noumea was also in competition for labor in this period, for after 1872 it had to cope with a large influx of exiled Communards, the so-called ***déportés.*** The administration, on a reduced budget since the disasters of the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune uprising, was under pressure to house and service this influx; shopkeepers and bartenders in Noumea experienced an expansion of business, only exceeded by the arrival of French troops brought in to quell the rebellion in 1878. All these developments caused a rise in the demand for cheap New Hebridean labor.

In spite of the impression given in contemporary literature that most of the New Hebrideans were employed in mining, this was never the case. The impression probably came about because they were more visible in mining, being employed in large gangs, and also because of the publicity surrounding the high death rate at mining sites. But at the high point of their employment in mining, at the end of 1882, only a little more than a quarter were working at the mines, as against about a third at "stations in the bush," and more than 40 percent were employed in Noumea or in local and coastal shipping.[50]

The pattern of employment was once again changed for a few years in 1885, when a severe depression in the mining industry closed most of the mines. Surviving mine workers who were not repatriated were probably diverted to other occupations, particularly to burgeoning coffee plantations and to domestic service.[51] But in the mining revival of the late eighties, a period when the labor trade was officially banned, so-called free New Hebridean labor--totally unregulated and uncontracted--was going to the mines, to Le Nickel at Thio, to the Méré mine near Houailou, to new mines in the north near Pam, and to the phosphate diggings in the Chesterfield Islands.[52] During other periods of depression in mining, from 1892 to 1895 and from 1903 to 1906, there was again a diversion of New Hebridean labor to other occupations, but in 1912 mining still employed more than 20 percent of indentured New Hebridean labor (although there were only some seven hundred New Hebrideans in the colony by that time, of whom 125

were "free residents,"[53] who would not have elected to work in mining, the most hated of occupations).

Whenever the New Caledonian community argued for help in introducing cheap Oceanian labor or petitioned the government against the suspension of the labor trade, it always argued that agriculture and mining would be ruined without this form of labor. It very rarely referred to other uses of New Hebridean labor, which, although considerable, would have been less persuasive in the context of economic development. I refer to labor in shops, stores, hotels and bars, and above all as domestic servants in private homes. Domestic service had always been the most constant if not the largest employer of imported Oceanians. Mines closed down, farms and businesses went bankrupt, but the demand for personal servants never wavered, in town or country. Over the whole period, cooks, nursemaids, and houseworkers were always wanted by public servants as well as private settlers. In the bush there was often no clear distinction drawn between field and domestic duties; it depended on the needs of the employer, and no doubt all hands were in the fields at harvest time. By the 1920s however, nearly all New Hebrideans, whether indentured or "free residents," worked in Noumea, either in domestic service in private homes, bars, and restaurants, or as dock and store laborers.[54]

Labor Conditions

The New Hebridean indentured laborers worked long hours, from dawn to dusk, with breaks for meals, but so did European workers in the same period. In the matter of food, shelter, and clothing, minimum standards were laid down by regulation, but as on-site inspections were rare, the daily conditions of workers depended almost entirely on what their employers considered appropriate. One has to assume that in their own long-term interest most employers provided adequately for the needs of their workers, but there were quite large employers who consistently underfed their workers.[55] Although this news spread to the New Hebrides and was given as a reason for not recruiting for "Noumea,"[56] the lack of effective control in New Caledonia itself meant that such behavior continued. The same can be said in the matter of clothing: there are several references to the failure of certain employers to provide sufficient clothing to cope with a much cooler climate than New Hebrideans and Solomon Islanders were accustomed to, especially in the early mornings and evenings of the winter months and particularly in the mountains,[57] but I have yet to come across a prosecution for this fault.

As is usual under a system of indentured labor, there were penal sanc-

tions enforcing the labor contract. For absence from work, refusal to work, insubordination, and a number of other disciplinary infractions, workers could be sent to an ***atelier de discipline,*** on the recommendation of their employer, for from eight to sixty days.[58] This procedure had obvious disadvantages for employers, especially those in the bush, and some resorted to their own more direct methods of discipline--fines and corporal punishment. So far as physical abuse is concerned, Governor Courbet was probably right when he said that cases of real cruelty were unlikely to exist in the capital, where the employer was under the eye of the authorities, but that there had been several bad cases in the interior, where the master believed he was a law unto himself.[59] However, the governor might have added that it also seemed to be normal for overseers on plantations to carry a whip or a stick, and in one court case an employer accused of cruelty to New Hebridean workers argued, without being contradicted, that the commissioner for immigration himself kept a whip behind the door and used it on recalcitrant ***"canaques"*** they brought to him.[60] Cases of bad physical abuse did come before the courts, but where offenders were convicted they generally received only derisory fines and were not prohibited from continuing to employ servile labor.[61] Courbet was also correct in his belief that most employers freely dispensed minor corporal punishments and that slaps, blows, kicks, and pushes were generally considered quite normal means of emphasizing a point to colored workers, as they were in most places where unfree labor was used:[62] ***"c'est déjà trop,"*** wrote an official in the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies in the margin against Courbet's remark, admonishing the governor for treating this as of little account.[63]

Clearly, the conditions of workers varied enormously in the colony Large firms, perhaps more conscious of their long-term interests, tended to adhere to the regulations. Many small employers also treated their workers well: some even became attached to their "boys." However, the failure of the administration to control cases of ill-treatment impaired the reputation of New Caledonia as a recruiting destination,

One form of abuse that New Hebrideans were not prepared to forgive was the failure to pay wages.[64] In brief, there is abundant evidence that many employers considered that, once they had paid the passage money or, in the common parlance, "bought" the laborer, they had paid enough: he or she was theirs for three, four, or five years. In theory, wages were paid every three months before the ***syndic,*** who in the bush was usually the gendarme; but this provision was rarely observed. Some employers would give advances to workers when needed and pay only at the end of the term. Others evaded payment altogether. As well, the arbitrary infliction of fines for alleged infractions sometimes entirely swallowed up a worker's wages. The Mobile

Inspection of 1907 found that nonpayment of contracted workers, Asian as well as New Hebridean, was widespread.[65]

Migrant workers were prepared to put up with a good deal of hardship for the sake of the small payment that accumulated and was eventually turned into a box full of trade goods to take home at the end of their term. To come home empty-handed was a shameful thing and a source of hostility on the part of their community. The failure of the administration to enforce the regulations in this respect was seen by people such as French naval commanders and the Mobile Inspection from France as a serious obstacle to recruiting.[66]

Life and Death in the Colony

Even if well treated, the recruit had a harsh and difficult life in the colony, He was not used to regular hours of hard work, he had to mix with workers from other islands, equally strange to him as New Caledonia itself, he did not know the language of his master or of the other workers and had to acquire ***bislamar*** or impoverished French. Above all, he was separated from his kin. It was little wonder that in his free time he often turned to alcohol to forget his miseries. The abuse of alcohol only brought him impoverishment and ill health. The liquor he consumed was almost invariably of very inferior quality, but its purchase consumed much of his meager earnings; above all, drunkenness led to fights, to arrest, and to prison or fines or both.[67]

The abuse of alcohol increased the already serious health risks of this population, who died at a rate several times greater than that of the white population. Consumption and dysentery were chiefly blamed for the alarming mortality, but, as these workers lived in close proximity and often in insanitary conditions, they were also the first and greatest casualties of an epidemic illness. Unaccustomed heavy work and poor nutrition--for even where the diet met the regulations, its staple food was often quantities of white rice[68]--no doubt lowered their resistance. Courbet estimated the death rate among them at 5 percent (or 50 per thousand) per annum for the years 1879-1882, which, as he observed, were years ***free*** of epidemics. He was shocked at this figure--***"un chiffre énorme,"*** he said. But it was in fact far greater than he thought, for the figures he used were from the "trusteeship of unclaimed estates" ***(curatelle aux successions et biens vacants),*** which listed deceased indentured laborers (among others) who died intestate with possessions or money. The number of these was inferior to the number recorded in the ***état civil,*** which itself was a minimum figure, since far from all New Hebridean deaths were registered.[69] For 1881, for example, Cour-

bet estimated 120 deaths (30 per quarter), using the ***curatelle*** lists, but even the number of deaths recorded in the ***état civil*** for that year is 151, or about 62 per thousand.[70] This was a peak year in the mining industry, where the death rate was acknowledged to be excessive.[71] But the figure of 50 per thousand that so shocked Governor Courbet was often surpassed in other years also, particularly after a year of heavy intake of recruits, for, just as Ralph Shlomowitz has found for Queensland and Fiji, the indentured laborers were at greatest risk in their first year of service.[72] In the year of the measles epidemic, 1875, the figure was at least 124 per thousand. In the plague years of 1899, 1906, and 1912, it was again over 50, and it indeed appears to have been between 30 and 40 even in the first two decades of the twentieth century, when there would have been very few agglomerations of workers. In addition, the morbidity rate was very high, and there were many complaints of workers being repatriated on the point of death, including one from the British district agent in Tanna, who had compiled a record of local people who died soon after repatriation.[73]

Although it is unlikely that the New Hebrideans made a large demographic impact on the population of New Caledonia, they left some descendants. Many of the women had progeny during their time in the colony:[74] some of these may have returned with them to their homeland, but many stayed. Of the children from the numerous liaisons with white men, some were recognized by their fathers and brought up in the white community, and there were even a couple of legal marriages; other children of such unions were brought up by their mothers in the colony. There were also children born not only to male and female New Hebridean workers, but also to male New Hebrideans and local Kanak women, and local Kanak men and New Hebridean women.[75] I would assume that most in the last two categories were assimilated into tribal life,[76] but I have come across one enterprising Solomon Islander who took his Kanak wife back with him to the Solomon Islands. When last heard of, he had established a coffee plantation there, using the skills he had acquired in New Caledonia, and the couple were living together in prosperity.[77]

Unfortunately, I can say very little about what happened to those who survived their term and returned in triumph to their homeland with their box of goods. I suspect it would take another ten years to find out, using the techniques of oral history; it seems a promising research project for a ni-Vanuatu student. What is certain is that New Caledonia owes a lot of its early development to the contribution of the New Hebrideans and Solomon Islanders who came to work here during that period. They have done so since under much happier conditions.

NOTES

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for suggestions that improved this article.

1. The first scholarly work on the subject was O. W. Parnaby, *Britain and the Labor Trade in the Southwest Pacific* (Durham, N.C., 1964); ground-breaking work was done by Deryck Scarr in *Fragments of Empire* (Canberra, 1967), and Peter Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation* (Melbourne, 1973). K. E. Saunders, *Workers in Bondage* (St. Lucia, Qld., 1982), and C. R. Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay* (Port Moresby, 1985) deal with the life of the indentured laborer in Queensland. Numerous studies of various aspects of the traffic have appeared in articles, theses, and book chapters. A useful overview is Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie, and Doug Munro, eds., *Labour in the South Pacific* (Townsville, Qld., 1990).

2. One of the exceptions, Michel Panoff, in 1979 made a (largely unsuccessful) plea to anthropologists to pay more attention to this subject, which had had deep repercussions on the society that was the subject of their study, in "Travailleurs, recruteurs et planteurs dans l'Archipel Bismarck de 1885 à 1914," *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 35, no. 64 (1979): 172.

3. By Clive Moore, in "Revising the Revisionists: The Historiography of Immigrant Melanesians in Australia," *Pacific Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 1992): 61.

4. I have systematically searched the Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer (hereafter ANSOM) in Paris and the Archives Territoriales in Noumea. The records of the Immigration Department in Noumea contain files dealing with Asian immigrant labor but not New Hebridean; possibly the latter were assimilated into the records of the Department of Native Affairs, most of whose records have not so far turned up in any public repository.

5. The shipping reports in the newspapers were the major source for an estimate of the volume of the trade. I searched the official paper *Le Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (hereafter *Moniteur)* from its inception (1859) for shipping movements, cargo, and passengers: later both it and its successor *Le Journal Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (hereafter *Journal Officiel)* left the detail to the private newspapers. Apart from short-lived papers like *La Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1878-1879) and *Petites Affiches de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1874-1878), among nongovernment newspapers I used the *Néo-Calédonien* (1880-1889), *Le Progrés de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1880-1884), which became *Le Progrès de Nouméa* (1884-1885), *L'Avenir de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1886-1892), *Le Colon de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1888-1890), *L'Indépendant de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (1884-1889), *La France Australe* (1889-1930), and *La Calédonie* (1892-1907). It was an immensely tedious and time-consuming process to scan more than sixty years of local newspapers for this purpose, but unexpected benefits accrued. Not only did I sometimes glean some rare details about the recruits, but I also discovered that where there did exist an official estimate for any one year it was usually wrong by a considerable margin. This indicates to me that more caution needs to be exercised in accepting at face value the official figures for other areas also. My thanks are due to Dr. Anne-Gabrielle Thompson, who helped me do this work in the first three years of this study, and to the Australian Research Council, whose financial assistance made this help possible.

6. These are the main sources only, an exhaustive list being too long to put in an article of this length. Where individual names were given, all details so garnered were put on computer under name and twenty-four selected attributes. I now have just under six thousand individual records. I am indebted to the Procureur de la République in Noumea for permission to use the *état civil* for statistical purposes.

7. The documentation of official inquiries and inspections remained patchy, but was rich when it occurred. Among other sources, independent newspapers in Noumea—continuous from 1880—and the Procès-Verbaux du Conseil-Général (proceedings of the local assembly, hereafter PVCG), Noumea, provided valuable comment, supplemented by external impressions from British officials, French and British missionaries, humanitarian reformers, and visitors.

8. This is clear in the newspaper reports at the time and from official reports afterwards. The public reasons given for the prohibitions of the trade related to a concern for abuses. In both cases, however, other motives appear in the official correspondence: in the first case, an attempt to employ instead local Melanesians considered dangerous (after the 1878 revolt) when "idle," as well as freed convicts; and in the second, a concern to employ the freed convicts in a time of economic depression. Both were also related to the concern that the British government would seize on the incidence of abuses as an excuse to annex the New Hebrides. Minister of the Navy and Colonies (Jauréguiberry) to Governor Courbet, 5 May 1882, BB4 1577, Archives de la Marine (hereafter AM), Paris; Governor Le Boucher to Minister for Navy and Colonies, 14 Mar. 1885 (telegram), and the minister's reply, 16 Mar. 1885 (telegram), New Caledonia, Affaires Politiques, carton 282, ANSOM; Pierre Gascher, *La belle au bois dormant* (Noumea, 1974), 228. See also, H.B.M. Consul E. L. Layard to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, 25 Oct. 1887, Inward Correspondence, Western Pacific High Commission (hereafter WPHC), London, 219/87 (microfilm, Australian National Library, Canberra).

9. This figure—arrived at by the method described above—is for arrivals, not discounting for those who recruited for a second time. However, since New Caledonia was the least popular destination, "second timers" to the French colony—unlike Queensland—were few. Since my figure for arrivals is a minimum (partly because many numbers of the newspapers were not extant and partly because, in the first fifteen years of the labor trade, recruiting vessels were allowed to call at the eastern ports of Canala and Thio, where many laborers were off-loaded, and these arrivals were rarely reported in the Noumea newspapers), the figure is probably close to the actual number of individuals recruited.

10. Estimated from information derived from shipping reports in the newspapers, percentage of "places of origin" on the death registries, and estimates from official reports. The Solomon Islanders are much harder to count, since they are usually included under the term "New Hebridean" in the references to them in estimates, and reports of ships that have been to both the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands often do not break down the total number of recruits by island of origin. There is also a dearth of detail about voyages that took place in the period of 1885–1890, during the official suspension in the trade, although it seems that at least two voyages to the Solomons were then made. The Gilbertese came from only two voyages to these islands.

11. The 1894 figure includes those engaged under irregular arrangements during the second period of official suspension.

12. *"Le Néo-Hébridais est partout et peu de maisons en sont privées."* "Rétablissement de l'immigration Néo-Hébridaise et des archipels voisins," report of the commission set up by Governor Pallu de la Barrière, 4 Apr. 1883, Affaires Politiques, carton 282, ANSOM.

13. For example, "Julian Thomas" (alias "The Vagabond," alias Stanley James), *Cannibals and Convicts* (London, 1886); J. W. Anderson, *Notes of Travel in Fiji and New Caledonia* (London, 1880); Charles Lemire, *Voyage à pied en Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Paris, 1884); Marc Le Goupils, *Dans la brousse calédonienne: Souvenirs d'un ancien planteur, 1898-1904* (Paris, 1928); and many others.

14. Although small numbers of Asians arrived between 1864 and 1885, and larger contingents in the 1890s and 1900s the very large importations of Vietnamese and Indonesians from the 1920s probably dwarfed the memories of earlier exotic labor.

15. Gascher, *La belle au bois dormant.*

16. Most of the information regarding the New Hebrideans in New Caledonia in Donna Winslow, "Workers in Colonial New Caledonia to 1945" (in *Labour in the South Pacific,* ed. Moore, Leckie, and Munro, 108-121) was added by one of the editors from an unpublished paper of mine representing work in progress, without specific acknowledgment of my authorship.

17. In 1902, according to official estimates, there were 1,711 indigenous Melanesians under indenture, of whom 1,153 were Loyalty Islanders. *Annuaire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Noumea, 1902), 296.

18. *Bulletin Officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* 1865:171. The contract was negotiated 29 Apr. to 1 May 1865, but the first convoy of New Hebrideans under this arrangement did not arrive until 9 Aug.

19. The right of all foreign governments to recruit labor in the Solomons was withdrawn from 31 Dec. 1911. Great Britain, Foreign Office, London, General Correspondence, 371, 1911 1175/22289.

20. Annual Report, 1912, New Caledonia, Affaires Politiques, carton 271, ANSOM, reports 122 New Hebrideans recruited in the year, "nearly all from Tanna"; see also report of the Rev. J. Campbell Nicholson, Lenakel, Tanna, July 1912, in *Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides, South Sea Islands* (hereafter *Quarterly Jottings),* John G. Paton mission fund, Essex, no. 79 (Jan. 1913).

21. There are numerous casual references to these practices. Some examples are (as concubine of employer) Marc Le Goupils, *Dans la brousse,* 128; ("bought" for an overseer) *Le Progrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie,* 15 Jan. 1882; ("sale" for the purpose of concubinage), ibid., 5 Apr. 1884, 15 May 1884; *Le Progrés de Nouméa* (continuation of *Le Progrès de la* N.-C. after 30 July 1884), 6 Aug. 1884; "The Vagabond," "In the South Seas," *The Age* (Melbourne), 3 Sept. 1887. Births as a result of such liaisons are the ultimate evidence.

22. The first labor code dealing with these "immigrants" is that of 26 Mar. 1874. It was an *arrêté,* that is, a regulation of the local administration, as distinct from a *décret* of the metropolitan government. The text appeared in *Moniteur,* 1 Apr. 1874. It laid down no minimum age, although a clause (article 37) stating that children under ten need only receive half rations recognized that very young children were routinely recruited, but the minimum legal age of six is cited in several documents arguing for a change in this state of affairs. It also appeared in the instructions given to government agents in 1881: "You will take care that no children under the age of six are recruited" ("General Instructions given to Government Agents on board ships undertaking immigration from the New Hebrides," 1881, New Caledonia, carton 63, ANSOM).

23. "Modifications à la réglementation sur l'immigration proposées dans le cours de ses interrogations," Mémoires et Documents, Océanie, vol. 4, Archives des Affaires Etrangères (hereafter M&D, O, vol. 4, AAE), Paris.

24. Decree (of the metropolitan government) of 1893 on indentured immigrant labor, *Bulletin Officiel,* 11 July 1893.

25. *Journal Officiel,* 22 Oct. 1904.

26. *"C'est là un des plus tristes côtés de ce genre d'opérations."* "Rapport sur l'immigration Néo-Hébridaise," Governor Courbet to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, 17 Feb. 1882 (hereafter Courbet, "Rapport sur l'immigration"), New Caledonia, carton 63, ANSOM.

27. In his letters to Victor Schoelcher early in 1880, Léon Marchand asserts that recruits coming in the previous few years were "almost exclusively" children. Léon Marchand to Schoelcher, 2 Feb. 1880, Schoelcher Papers, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. One must allow for exaggeration in letters to a crusading reformer, but the death statistics for the 1870s also show a markedly higher proportion of children than for the next decade, especially in the group aged six to twelve (more than twice the proportion in the 1880s). Many other factors enter into death statistics, so they cannot form more than a rough guide to the proportions recruited.

28. Article 16 of the labor code (26 Mar. 1874).

29. *"Ils sont plus faciles à allécher par les promesses, par les cadeaux sans valeur."* Marchand to Schoelcher, 2 Feb. 1880.

30. *"Mais, il faut bien le dire, dans la majeure partie des cas, ce sont les parents qui amènent leurs fils au recruteur. Le 'boy' est troqué contre les objets qui excitent la convoitise du père."* Courbet, "Rapport sur l'immigration."

31. Marchand to Schoelcher, 2 Feb. 1880. See also "The Vagabond," "In the South Seas," *The Age,* 9 July 1887; V. Lee Walker to his mother, 3 Feb. 1885, Walker letters, Rhodes House, Oxford; Charles Godey, *Tablettes d'un ancien fonctionnaire* (Paris, 1886), 121-122.

32. Government Agent Rouzaud reported nine there in 1875, when the French had none at all. Report of Government Agent Rouzaud to the Director of the Interior, 5 Aug. 1875, New Caledonia, carton 282, ANSOM.

33. See, for example, Commandant Bigant of the *Sâone* to the Governor of New Caledonia, 12 Aug. 1890. "I cannot prevent the *Mary Anderson* from taking passengers or emigrants where she likes. . . . We have not, in France, like the English, either a Kidnapping Act or a Western Pacific Order in Council. . . . I have already had the honour of pointing out to you this lacuna in our laws." BB4 1996, AM.

34. "Commission of Inquiry charged with throwing the greatest possible light on the acts of which the French ships the *Aurora* and *Lulu* are accused," Sept. 1880, New Caledonia, carton 63, ANSOM. In the course of the inquiry, it became clear that the crudest methods of kidnaping--such as canoe smashing--were practiced not only on the two voyages of the *Aurora,* but also on both the voyages of the *Venus* of that year (the *Lulu* was exonerated, not having sailed in that year, but the complainants had only mistaken the name of the vessel--the deeds attributed to the *Lulu* had been perpetrated by the *Venus).* The captain and recruiter on the first voyage of the *Aurora* were tried and convicted of acts of violence only after the government agent turned state's witness; the *Venus* crew were not charged until 1882, when the jury in Noumea defied the judge's direction and acquitted them. Report of Lafarge, President of the Superior Court, 14 Sept. 1882, encl. in Courbet to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies, 19 Sept. 1882, BB4 1577, AM. In 1880, of the five voyages completed by the time of the inquiry (September), all were made by the *Aurora* and the *Venus.*

35. See above, n. 8.

36. J. Campbell Nicholson, *Quarterly Jottings,* no. 75 (Jan. 1912).

37. For example, Corris, *Passage,* 53-59.

38. The Rev. W. Gray to Sir Samuel W. Griffith, 10 Sept. 1892, encl. in Sir H. W. Norman to Marquess of Ripon, 6 Mar 1893; Further Correspondence Relating to Polynesian Labour in the Colony of Queensland, Great Britain, *Commons Papers 1893-1894,* vol. 61, no. 39, 44; *La Calédonie,* 22 Sept. and 16 Nov. 1894, 12 Feb. 1895.

39. Report of the Government Agent of the *Marie,* voyage 21 Feb. to 18 Aug. 1885, New Caledonia, carton 64, ANSOM.

40. See, for example, the report of the *Lady St. Aubyn,* in *La Calédonie,* 15 June 1893.

41. James Paddon brought his New Hebridean workers with him when he settled on Ile Nou in 1855. Bêche-de-mer and sandalwood traders like captains Lewis and Henry employed New Hebrideans almost exclusively as sailors and boats crew on their ships trading around the island, and as laborers on their stations. Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood* (Melbourne, 1967), chap. 15, 190-199.

42. Bronwen Douglas, "Conflict and Alliance," *Journal of Pacific History* 15, nos. 1-2 (1980): 32.

43. Bronwen Douglas, "Culture Contact in New Caledonia" (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, Canberra), 173-174, 418-420.

44. Examples of distribution of the earliest New Hebridean recruits can be found in *Moniteur* 20 Jan. 1867, and *Bulletin Officiel,* Noumea, 1867-1868, 256.

45. The sources for the occupations of the New Hebrideans consist of accumulated references in official reports, court records, and newspapers, and death notices indicating place of death and either occupation of the worker or the name of the employer whose business was known. Sometimes they are supplemented by the direct observation of visitors.

46. Reply to a questionnaire addressed to the Colonial Secretariat, 27 Apr. 1874, Great Britain, Admiralty, Royal Navy Australia Station, 32.

47. Dorothy Shineberg, "Noumea No Good, Noumea No Pay," *Journal of Pacific History* 26, no. 2 (1991): 189-205.

48. These movements of labor can be tracked through the coastal shipping reports and also through subsequent notices of death at the mine sites in the *état civil.*

49. There are many descriptions of New Hebridean "labor boys" working at the mines. See, for example, Anderson, *Notes of Travel in Fiji and New Caledonia,* 200, 206; Lemire, *Voyage à pied en Nouvelle-Calédonie,* 201; Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts,* 100-101; E. Glasser, "Rapport à M. le Ministre des Colonies sur les richesses minérales de la Nouvelle-Calédonie," *Annales des Mines* (Paris), tenth series, 1903-1904, 518.

50. "Renseignements sur les immigrants néo-hébridais," 1 Jan. 1883, 111.1, Archives de l'Archevêché de Nouméa (hereafter AAN). This is an unattributed report that clearly derives from official figures, now lost, since some of the figures elsewhere in it coincide exactly with figures used by Governor Courbet and also in an inspection report.

51. The occupations of a complete convoy of New Hebrideans who arrived in August 1884 are given in the *Moniteur* for 20 Aug. 1884; three of them listed as nickel-sorters at the mines died before the end of their first term at coffee plantations in Canala, no doubt part of a contingent transferred from the mines when they closed down in 1885.

52. In the years 1888-1891, the deaths of 157 imported Oceanians at the mines were reported in the *état civil.* The Le Nickel company, the only employer to use the category in the death notices, referred to fifty-nine of its deceased workers as "free laborers," a habit it dropped after an 1890 regulation enjoined employers to regularize the position of their migrant workers. The shipping of New Hebrideans to the Chesterfields is noted in the coastal shipping reports appearing in the newspapers of 1887 to 1889 (see n. 5 for names of newspapers).

53. Annual Report, 1912, section 8, "Main d'oeuvre et immigration," New Caledonia, Affaires Politiques, carton 271, ANSOM.

54. Of the 148 New Hebridean deaths registered in the 1920s 136 died in Noumea. Of the 105 of the latter whose occupations were given, 85 were laborers and 17 domestic ser-

vants. See also H.B.M. Consul T. D. Dunlop to Winston Churchill, encl. in Churchill to Gov. Gen. of Australia, 12 July 1921, CRS A981, New Caledonia, 1921-1942, vol. 1, Australian Archives, Canberra.

55. Governor Courbet, "Rapport sur l'immigration," 17 Feb. 1882; *Le Progrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie,* 5 Feb. 1882; PVCG, 22 Nov. 1904 (Councillor Blandeau).

56. See, for example, the report of Government Agent Rouzaud of his recent cruise in the New Hebrides, 5 Aug. 1875, New Caledonia, carton 282, ANSOM.

57. Governor Pallu de la Barrière to Minister for the Navy and Colonies, 8 Dec. 1882, New Caledonia, Affaires Politiques, carton 282, ANSOM; Letter from "A" to *France Maritime* (Paris), 9 Sept. 1882; PVCG, 22 Nov. 1904.

58. Article 16 of the *arrêté* of 26 Mar. 1874, BB4, 1604, AM.

59. Courbet, "Rapport sur l'immigration."

60. Report of the trial of M. de Gimel, *Le Progrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie,* 12 Feb. 1882.

61. See, for example, the report of the trial of de Gimel for cruelty to four female New Hebridean workers, in *Le Progrès de la Nouvelle-Calédonie,* 8, 12, 15, 22, and 29 Jan. 1882 (he was fined ten francs). One employer, Julien Déméné, was before the courts three times in four years on charges of ill-treating his New Hebridean workers. In 1878, he was found guilty of aggravated assault and fined sixteen francs; in 1879, he was charged with having in 1875 (!) assaulted an employee, causing his death, and acquitted; in 1881, he was prosecuted for having caused the death of four New Hebridean workers "through imprudence, inattention, negligence or non-observance of the regulations" and of beating and "using force and other assaults" on these four men and several other New Hebridean employees: he was acquitted on the first charge and given one month's prison for the second. Records of the Tribunal Correctionel, 13 June 1878; Records of the Cour Criminelle, 28 June 1879; Records of the Tribunal Correctionel, 24 Mar. 1881 (Noumea Archives).

62. Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts,* 150; for Queensland, see Saunders, *Workers in Bondage,* 76; for Queensland and Fiji, see Corris, *Passage,* 83; for Hawaii, see Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii* (Honolulu, 1985), 74.

63. See Courbet, "Rapport sur l'immigration."

64. I have written about this at length in "Noumea No Good, Noumea No Pay."

65. Ibid., 195-196.

66. For example, see the Report of Contre-Amiral Du Petit-Thouars, 1874, M&D, O, vol. 4, AAE, 102; letter of Commandant Gadaud to the Governor of New Caledonia, 22 Oct. 1894, BB4, 1996, AM; Report of Inspector Gayet, Mobile Inspection of 1929, New Caledonia, carton 746, ANSOM.

67. There are countless reports of these events in the newspapers, especially on Monday mornings, and in the proceedings of the Tribunal Correctionel.

68. The "normal" official weekly ration was 5.6 kilos of rice. *Moniteur,* 16 June 1867. Numa-Auguste Joubert fed his New Hebrideans 800 grams of rice per day. *Moniteur,* 15 Jan. 1873. The journal of the government agent of the *Winifred,* at Ambrym, 11 Apr. 1879, reports complaints of "too much rice" in New Caledonia; rice is named as the staple of Ballande's New Hebrideans in *La Calédonie,* 6 Jan. 1900.

69. To quote one example only, in 1912 the British district agent on Tanna drew up a list of the names of 352 Tannese who had gone to work in New Caledonia "in recent times" (estimated by him as three years ago or less but by me as more likely a much longer period before, probably from the late 1890s to 1912). Wilkes to British Resident Commissioner for the New Hebrides, 10 Oct. 1912, encl. in British Resident Commissioner to Western Pacific High Commissioner, 4 Nov. 1912, Inward Correspondence. WPHC, 2259/12. Of these 352, 202 were known to have died in the colony, but only 21 of these names were registered in the acts of the *état civil,* liberal allowance being made for a different French spelling.

70. Both Courbet's and my calculations of death rate are based on the governor's estimate of the existing "Hebridean" population for that year of 2,346.

71. The death rate in the two previous years (1880, 1881) was also much higher than the 50 per thousand figure of Courbet: respectively around 81-82 and 62 per thousand.

72. Ralph Shlomowitz, "Mortality and the Pacific Labour Trade," *Journal of Pacific History* 22, nos. l-2 (1987): 34-55. The same is true for New Caledonia: the curve for deaths (based on the *état civil)* follows closely behind that for arrivals, although peaking out of proportion when there is an epidemic. Samples of complete convoys also show the highest rate of mortality in the first year of service.

73. Wilkes to British Resident Commissioner, 10 Oct. 1912. Wilkes reported that, of 92 Tannese who had been repatriated "in recent years," only 53 returned well and strong. Of the other 39, one died on the voyage home, 35 were returned dying or gravely ill and died within a year of repatriation, one returned a cripple, one a leper, and another a permanent invalid.

74. A total of 265 New Hebridean women gave birth to one or more children in the colony, according to the *état civil,* a minimum figure. Some births "never registered" became known only because the child later died or got married; there were surely many more.

75. Information about the liaisons producing children, the recognition or not of the latter, and so forth, are from the *état civil.* Under the terms of my use of these registries, particularly in the period of the last hundred years, details may not be given.

76. In 1913, Father Passant, stationed at Paita, came across a New Hebridean from Epi who had settled down with a woman from the tribe of N'dé, having no intention of returning home and living with "the natives of N'dé, who recognize him as one of theirs." He

requested baptism, as the woman was a Christian convert, and he wished the priest to marry them. R. P. Louis Passant à Monseigneur [Chanrion], Paita, 28 Feb. 1913, AAN 71.2. During a recent visit to Noumea, I was told by a Melanesian priest that there are many descendants of New Hebrideans living *"en tribu,"* but I have not had the chance to pursue this information.

77. The Rev. Père L. Passant to Monseigneur [Chanrion], 19 June 1913, AAN 71.2. Father Passant did not know the name of the particular island to which they had returned.