

*Pacific Protest: The Maasina Rule Movement: Solomon Islands, 1944-1952.* Edited by Hugh Laracy. Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1983. xiii, 206 pp., maps, photographs, index. Fijian price: \$8(hard cover), \$5(soft cover).

IN A circular letter from Ron Crocombe (6 June 1984) advertising this (and other volumes) under the rubric 'Anthropology from the Inside', it is said to be among 'social and cultural studies in the Pacific Islands written by members of the societies and cultures concerned.' Such a description is misleading in the present case. The actual study was carried out by the editor, who provided an account of the history and nature of Maasina Rule (often called 'Marching Rule'); selected the documents which make up the bulk of the book and wrote introductions for each of the nine sections into which they are divided; and composed the chronology and bibliography of the movement which form the appendices. One selection consists of papers produced by government officials, and it is the contents of the other eight sections that present the words of the Solomon Islanders themselves. The form they take ranges from letters and announcements often written by men with a shaky command of English, to translations of documents originally written in one of the languages of Malaita Island, to transcripts of court proceedings in the trial of leaders of the movement. In his preface, Laracy acknowledges that they are 'an assemblage rather than a selection', but feels that not only does it enable participants to be heard speaking for themselves, but it supports a view of the movement that is unlikely to be much changed by the discovery and publication of other documents (pp.vi-viii).

In describing the movement, Laracy introduces themes to be illustrated by the documents. One is that Maasina Rule had precedents in pre-war resentment of treatment by the British because this deviated from 'the standards of fairness required by Christian belief and British law' (p.43), as understood particularly by labourers forcibly returned to Malaita after having been converted while working in Queensland. At this early point a persistent weakness of the collection appears: the under-representation of the illiterate, who are typically the non-Christian, in discussing a movement centred on an island which still contains a substantial number of pagans. Labourers did not need to have been told of the brotherhood of man or democratic ideals to resent their treatment by the British, though of course only those struck by the gap between official ideology and behaviour had reason to expect appeals to the King of England to improve matters (Document A2). Laracy does acknowledge in passing that pagans also were resentful, but he does so in curious terms: 'adherents [of Maasina Rule] had a tradition of taking themselves and their concerns seriously' (p.34). Who does not? As with the reference to the so-called 'instinct for survival, which the modern inhabitants of the [Solomons] group share with their ancestors' (p.7), Laracy sometimes implies, though certainly without meaning any insult, that the people he is discussing are psychologically distinctive.

The introduction nevertheless is concise and interesting, a useful addition to other accounts based on different sorts of data. One of its strengths is the tracing of both the sources of external opposition to the movement and its internal problems. The presentation of the documents is, however, not always so satisfactory. Some of the sections are masterly, notably the data documenting the inspiration provided by knowledge of 'the ideals of Churchill and Roosevelt', (p.24), for parallel movements which the government found threatening. It is not clear, however, why so much

space (36pp.) is given to a single 'genealogy', mostly composed of myth, when an excerpt would have conveyed the flavour of the whole. As regards a considerable number of the documents, Laracy says that 'imperfections [of English] rarely obscure their meaning' (p.vi). That was not my experience. If Laracy knows what was intended by: 'all the Head men are head over the Gov. Orders' (p.91) and: 'Custom judge a man from Other man's babies' (p.139), he should provide explanatory notes. These are also needed with some of the translations, which read well but contain terms and references to customs that are left unexplained. In translating from 'Are'are, Father Geerts, a Roman Catholic priest, usually gives the meaning of vernacular words for plants and types of shell money, but leaves the reader to guess at the nature of the political offices being described and to wonder what is meant by the term 'virgin' (perhaps sister of a leader?) which figures so prominently in document B2. This is a case in which the note is positively misleading, as is, elsewhere, the apparently sporadic insertion of *sic* beside mis-spelled words. (Curiously, it is not used in a document written by an Englishman (p.151), who seems to have used 'discriminations' for 'recriminations'.)

Despite the many portions which are unclear, the book does indeed provide fascinating material on the aims and development of not only Maasina Rule but other movements in the Solomons. It also documents, critically but with understanding, official reactions not only to the movements but to the outsiders who took the part of the local people. Throughout, Laracy makes clear his admiration for Maasina Rule. One reason is its success in presenting 'demands that could only be satisfied by independence' (p.34), and he shows well what those demands were, how they were expressed, and why they provoked particular reactions from various groups. In addition, however, he admires its ideal of 'brotherhood' which gave the movement its name, and speaks of this as an example 'to sustain [the Solomons] in the task of nation-building' (p.35). Any reader would endorse Laracy's hope that the central aims of the movement will be perpetuated.

ANN CHOWNING

*Victoria University of Wellington*

*Gunboat Frontier. British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-90.* By Barry Gough. University of British Columbia Press, 1984. Price unknown.

PROFESSOR Barry Gough of Wilfred Laurier University in Ontario, Canada, has written another of his excellent books for the series of maritime Pacific studies published by the University of British Columbia Press.

This book is as well written, as detailed, and as interesting as his *The Royal Navy on the Northwest Coast of North America 1810-1914* or his *Distant Dominion*, both about British Columbia and the Pacific. It is also a book which will provide many provocative comparisons with New Zealand experience. The dates of *Gunboat Frontier* ought to remind New Zealanders that, as a settled area, all of Canada west of the Great Lakes is much younger than New Zealand.