

Trading Contacts in the Bismarck Archipelago during the Whaling Era, 1799–1884

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HISTORIANS OF NEW GUINEA HAVE HAD LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT THE WHALING ERA, AND in the histories of the Bismarck Archipelago the whalers have been virtually invisible, even though significant work has been done on the roles of missionaries, beachcombers, castaways and traders.¹ It has been acknowledged that whalers first arrived around 1800, but where they went, the patterns they adopted, what they traded, with whom, and with what effect have yet to be discussed. This paper argues that with the judicious and intensive use of the logs of especially American whalers,² it is possible to form a detailed picture of trading and contact between islanders and Europeans. By using them in conjunction with other historical and non-historical sources, it is possible to elucidate the significance of the whalers and the impact of their trading on island societies.³

Most of the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago had experienced some contact with Europeans before the whalers began arriving in the 19th century. Ships in the East Indies and China trade had contacted islanders, introducing glass and metal to the New Guinea mainland,⁴ particularly in the west. From 1528 when the Spanish ship *Florida* was attacked in the Admiralties, there was an irregular stream of European visitors: the Dutch explorers Schouten and Le Maire in 1616, Tasman 1642, Dampier 1700, Carteret 1767, Bougainville 1768, Hunter 1791 and D'Entrecasteaux 1792.⁵

The impact of such contact is more difficult to assess. Before 1800 contact was sporadic and relations characterised by suspicion, tentative trading and occasional violence, each side's behaviour based upon fear and uncertainty as they grappled with their own spiritual and material perceptions to incorporate the other. Knowl-

¹ See, e.g., I. Hughes, *New Guinea Stone Age Trade* (Canberra 1977); P. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule* (Canberra 1978); S. Firth, *New Guinea Under the Germans* (Melbourne 1982); D. Oliver, *Bougainville, A Personal History* (Melbourne 1973); and K. Howe, *The Loyalty Islands, A History of Culture Contacts 1840–1906* (Canberra 1977).

² There appears to be little surviving oral evidence. In consequence, this study has relied upon 54 whaling logs of which 46 recorded some form of contact with islanders. These logs have been filmed for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (hereinafter PMB) and in New Zealand are held on microfilm in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, and in other participating libraries.

³ For sources, logs have been supplemented by the whalers' journals, memoirs, newspapers and records of the Royal Navy for information about trading and contact. Ethnographical and anthropological material on the Bismarcks has been used in conjunction with the primary sources to elucidate the impact of contact and trading.

⁴ Hughes, *New Guinea Stone Age Trade*, 13; J. Whittaker et al., *Documents and Readings in New Guinea History* (Milton, Qld 1975), 176.

⁵ See Hughes, loc. cit.; Whittaker, loc. cit.; Oliver, *Bougainville*, 18; O.E. Allen, *The Pacific Navigators* (Alexandria 1980), 80; *Journal of Abel Tasman* (Amsterdam 1898), 43; Louis de Bougainville, *A Voyage Around the World* (London 1772), 327; W. Dampier, *A Voyage to New Holland* (1981), 208–9; V.E. King, 'The End of an Era, Aspects of the History of the Admiralty Islands 1898–1908', BA Hons thesis, Macquarie University (Sydney 1978), 50; and Gray, 'From Windfall to Copra', 16–21.

edge of iron remained limited and most islanders had no contact with or knowledge of Western visitors.

By the turn of the century this had changed profoundly. The position of the Bismarck Archipelago on the direct sea link between Australia and East Asia meant that its waters were traversed regularly after British settlement of New South Wales in 1788. After this time routes northeast from Sydney to China were in regular use by government and private vessels. While large and faster ships kept to the east seeking maximum sail in the open sea, smaller ships chose the shorter inner routes, especially when refreshments were required. The St George's Channel route was best for this purpose.⁶

But in addition to the increase in maritime and commercial through-traffic, there was another presence. During the first half of the 19th century regular visits by whaling ships gradually succeeded occasional contacts by European explorers or passing merchant ships. Whalers, as opposed to merchants making their run to China or Bengal, had the opportunity and inclination for both contact and landing because they were constantly cruising the waters around the Archipelago. The first whaling ship arrived in 1799, and there was a gradual increase in their numbers in the 1830s. As the Atlantic became less profitable, American and British whaling ships increased their activity in the Pacific.⁷ The heyday of Pacific whaling lasted from 1835 to 1850,⁸ but in the Bismarcks the peak, as indicated by the number of whaling ships present, was reached in 1840. Remaining steady until 1870, numbers declined dramatically in the 1880s. The last recorded whaler there was in 1884, the year the Germans annexed the islands.⁹

The New Guinea waters were fished for sperm whale over three grounds,¹⁰ and, while larger grounds existed elsewhere in the Pacific, the New Guinea waters played an important role in what was essentially a seasonal industry. J. Whittaker suggested that the most extensive of these was off the northern coast of the main island on either side of 140°E longitude, and killings were made from October to November. However, according to the logs used in this study, an overwhelming majority of whalers bypassed this area in favour of the ground that stretched from New Hanover past New Ireland to Bougainville. Whittaker acknowledges that this was used and suggests it was fished from February to March, and another ground on the northeast coast of the main island was used in the season October to January.¹¹ As he tentatively suggests, the New Guinea whaling grounds were used in conjunction with whaling in the northern and central Pacific; virtually all the

⁶ Whittaker, *Documents*, 320.

⁷ For general histories of the Pacific Whaling industry, see J. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons* (Honolulu 1987); E. Dodge, *New England and the South Seas* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965); H. Forster, *The South Sea Whaler* (Sharon, Mass. 1985); C. Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses, Pacific Beach Communities of the Nineteenth Century* (Canberra 1977); S. Sherman, *Voice of the Whaleman* (Providence 1965); E. Stackpole, *The Sea Hunters* (New York 1953); A. Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery* (New York 1964); R.G. Ward, *American Activities in the Central Pacific 1790-1870*, Vol. 1 (New Jersey 1966); A. Whipple, *Yankee Whalers in the South Seas* (London 1954), and also Whittaker, *Documents*.

⁸ Ralston, *Grass Huts*, 16.

⁹ See Gray, 'From Windfall', Appendix 1 and 2.

¹⁰ See Forster, *The South Sea Whaler*, 143.

¹¹ Whittaker, *Documents*, 316-21.

American whalers fished the waters of the Archipelago before heading to Japan, the Solomons, Carolines, Australia and New Zealand to whale there or rest and replenish before returning or heading home.¹²

It has been generally held that during the season April to September the Japan grounds and the coast of Japan were fished. For the remainder of the year the on-the-line ground was utilised, and the New Guinea grounds were used in conjunction with this large and important ground.¹³ But while a few ships followed this pattern there is little evidence from the logs that the New Guinea grounds were fished seasonally. In fact little or no pattern emerges. For example, the *Resource* whaled off New Ireland in October 1799, and the *Elizabeth* did the same in November of 1849. The *Clarice* in 1844 spent April off New Britain, while the *Virginia* was off Buka in November 1845. Moreover the *Young Hector* was in Bougainville in July of 1859 and off New Ireland and Lihir during October of 1860.

Unlike other areas such as the Carolines and New Zealand, there were no permanent settlements or resorts in the Bismarcks, only common anchorages. More than two whalers were seldom at the same place at the same time. But virtually all of them spent months cruising the waters adjacent to the Archipelago, having sporadic contact with the islanders and each other. Because American whalers did all their processing at sea in huge tryworks that boiled the blubber down to oil, one of the tasks of whaling ships was to maintain supplies of wood, and some islands became centres for this activity, while others were conspicuously avoided because it was felt the islanders were too hostile or because there were no supplies.¹⁴ Many whalers' captains passed through the Archipelago and avoided (or did not log) all possible contact with islanders.¹⁵

While first contact with some groups on virtually all islands had occurred in the previous century, and some European trade goods had diffused through indigenous trade networks to many coastal and some inland groups, most of the contact between islanders and whalers through to the 1870s was relatively new and was never easy for either side. Where the contact between the two cultures occurred was often a matter of chance. The location, the quality of anchorages, the presence of reefs, the wind direction, in addition to the inaccuracies of charts, determined most where contact took place.

Even so it is clear from maps compiled from the sources that there were four epicentres that remained relatively constant. Cape Denis on the northeast point of the Trobriand Islands¹⁶ was a major stop for wood and bartering for yams. Generally, contact there was on land. On the New Ireland coast, Gower's Harbour

¹² There were of course exceptions. The *Avola* fished with considerable success out of season around New Ireland.

¹³ Whittaker, *Documents*, 321. One example of this seasonal fishing was the *Stephania*, which spent Jan. and Feb. in the New Guinea grounds before moving north to the Japan grounds.

¹⁴ See, e.g., the *Gay Head* in the Trobriands which would cut wood and then leave it to season before returning to pick it up later. The *Superior* focused on Joveny Island for its supplies. Never once did a whaler record venturing on shore at Buka or Bougainville to collect wood. The entry in the log of the *Avola* on 10 Mar. 1872 was 'went on shore gunning and got five pigeons' at the Duke of Yorks, a known and relatively safe place of contact.

¹⁵ See, e.g., the *Sea Queen*, *Sea Breeze*, *Sun* and *Peruvian*.

¹⁶ While this group does not lie within the confines of the Bismarck Archipelago, 19th-century whalers had it firmly within their mental map of the New Guinea grounds as a whole.

situated just within Cape St George was a popular site for refreshment and repair. For example, in 1859 the *Superior* moored there, the ship was washed, the sails dried, a leak in the bow fixed, 2,069 gallons of sperm oil stowed, water taken on, and hogs traded for with the islanders.¹⁷ Probably the most frequented spot was Port Hunter, a small bay at the northwest part of the Duke of York Islands, where it was generally agreed that the islanders were friendly, or became so as time went on, where there was ample fresh water and the anchorage was good.¹⁸ Buka Bay was the other most visited place,¹⁹ but there are only two recorded cases of contact on shore. Not only was the number of contacts greater in these places but the actual time the whalers spent there was longer.²⁰

In addition to showing the major foci of whaling contacts and trade, the maps reflect some of the changes that took place. What becomes clear is that during the whaling era some islands lost their popularity with the whalers, and in the later period there was a major re-orientation in the location of contact and trade. Buka and Bougainville, major centres of contact from 1840, were conspicuously avoided after the early 1870s, possibly because relations at other islands for onshore trade had improved, enabling whalers to avoid Buka and Bougainville and its sea trading.

In the same way, the Trobriands were ignored after 1860 except for one contact in 1875, possibly because supplies of firewood there were exhausted. The Duke of Yorks, a major centre of refreshment for the whalers, were totally ignored for nine years after 1872 (although this fact is not highlighted by the final map).²¹ The overwhelming majority of contacts from 1860 onwards occurred on the coasts from New Hanover down the north and east coasts of New Ireland between Tabar, Lihir, Tanga and Feni to Green Island. There was a slight increase in the number of ships during those later years, but more importantly an increase in the intensity and frequency of their contact. New Hanover, for example, was unvisited before 1870 but received intensive attention after then from two ships in particular, the *A. R. Tucker* and the *Palmetto*.

Some ships returned time after time to the exact place and tribe to replenish their supplies. The *Lusitania* in December 1828 at the northwest end of the St George's Channel logged,

¹⁷ *Superior*, Sat. 2 Apr. to Tue. 12 Apr. 1859, Kendall Whaling Museum, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (hereinafter PMB) Microfilm no. 818.

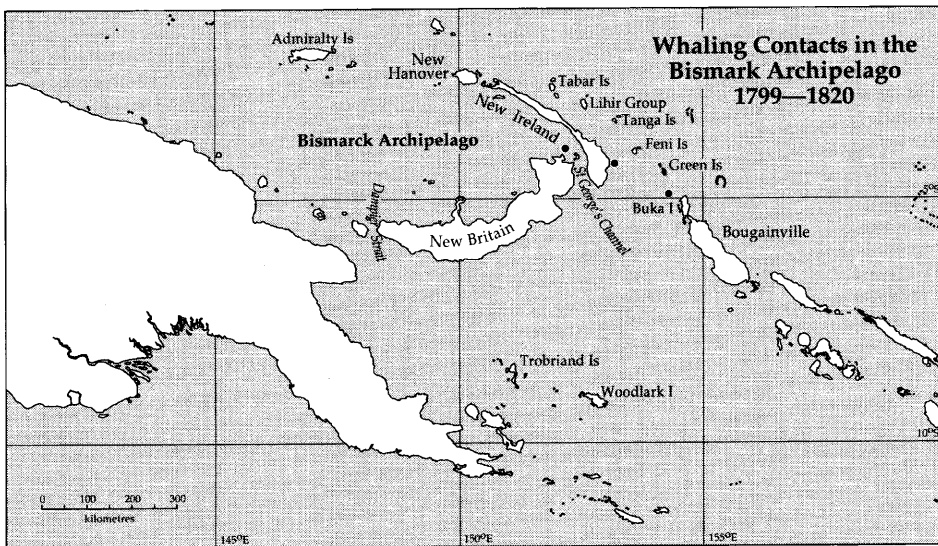
¹⁸ The Duke of Yorks group consists of 13 low islands where there were approximately 37 recorded contacts. Hunter, when he called, was attacked while collecting water and the islanders were only kept at a distance by periodically firing into the wood. See Whittaker, *Documents*, 323. A 'romantic and secluded spot', *Lusitania*, a British whaler, Thur. 13 Nov. 1828, MS Papers, Wellington, Alexander Turnbull Library.

¹⁹ Approximately 46 recorded contacts.

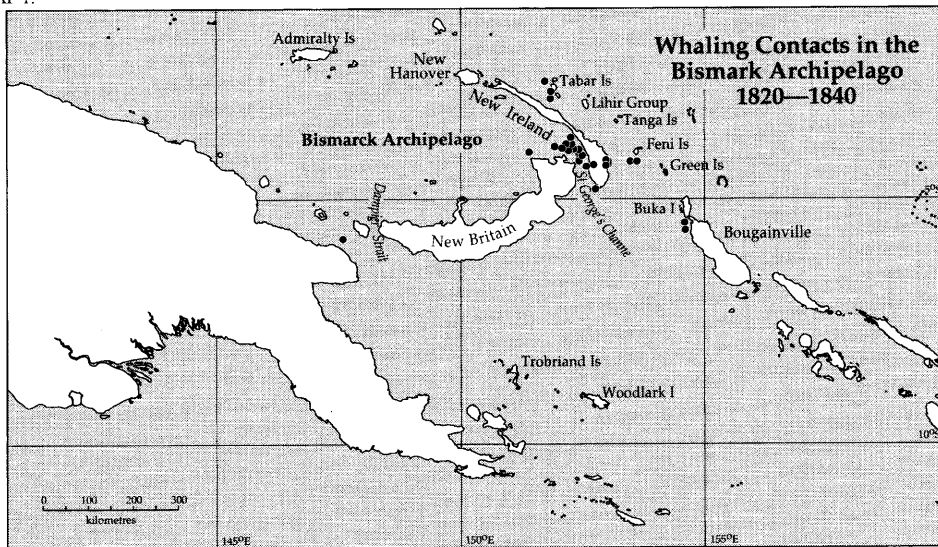
²⁰ See D. Sprod (ed.), *The Tregurtha Log* (Sandy Bay, Tas. 1980), 101; *A. R. Tucker*, 22 Oct. 1872, Kendall Whaling Museum, PMB 802; *Lusitania*, Wed. 11 Feb. 1829, Alexander Turnbull Library; *Avola*, Mon. 28 Dec. 1868, Kendall Whaling Museum, PMB 803. One of the difficulties in the compilation of trading and contact situations was that some ships merely mentioned that they were in, say, Gower's Harbour for a month, but did not mention every specific instance of trade. While this may make a quantitative difference, because these situations happened around the epicentres already mentioned there is little qualitative change. The patterns remain the same.

²¹ The presence of other Europeans contributed to the rapid inflation of prices, which whalers could not afford to pay. The whales themselves must have been rapidly depleting with the extensive whaling activity. What seems most significant, however, is that there was a growing new focus for the whalers.

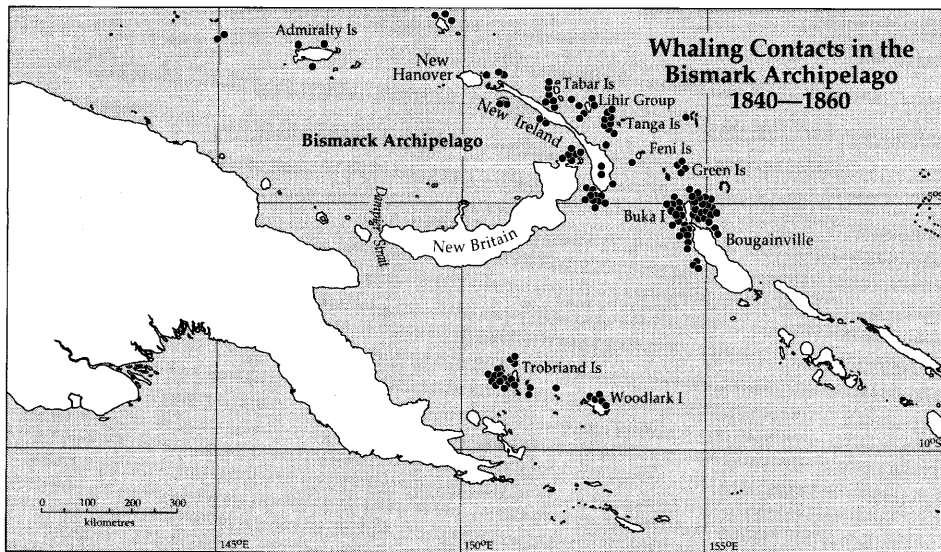
8 canoes were seen coming off from the land and we were wishing to procure a supply of taro the ship stood in to meet them. About 18 canoes containing upwards of 100 natives came alongside and on board. Among the number were many of our old friends who readily and gladly recognised us. The old chief of the village which is called Tupyia ... undertook to supply us with what we wanted. The trade which was wholly in iron hoop was conducted with the utmost honesty and good temper. The old chief of Tupayia [*sic*] came on board and was shown the process of boiling. He was so overcome that he was unable to speak. The art of heating water is wholly unknown among the natives.



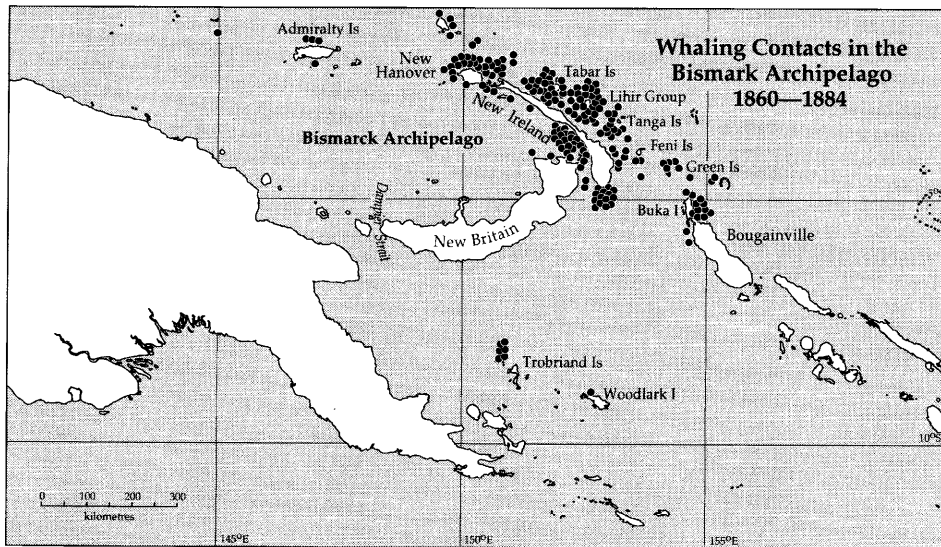
MAP 1:



MAP 2:



MAP 3:



MAP 4:

A later reference adds:

Most of the natives recognised us, many of them calling our Marquesians by name. The old man with the wonderful nose was at the head of them busy as a bee.²²

When it came to bartering goods the situation was a little different. Obviously trade did not occur in all contact situations,²³ although without doubt not all

²² *Lusitania*, 20 Nov. 1828, 26 Dec. 1828, 29 Dec. 1828.

²³ The *Lusitania* in 1829 logged, 'many visitors from New Britain who amused us for hours with their musical instruments'. *Lusitania*, Duke of Yorks, Mon. 5 Jan. 1829.

log-keepers noted every instance. Of over 360 recorded instances of contact, 260 involved trading. When whalers wanted to trade, they were a great deal more circumspect in their choice of location because close relations with the islanders were required. The political stability of the area, the whalers' perceptions of the place, and its previous record were important factors, as were the geography of the area and whether supplies of tradable commodities were plentiful. In many other parts of the Pacific the prevailing sexual codes influenced the frequency of whaling contact but this, it seems, was never a part of the Bismarcks' pattern. While the relative economic wealth or poverty of specific islands may have determined the type of trade and contact elsewhere, it is hard to prove or disprove that this was of any influence in the Bismarcks.

The most important point characterising trade in the Bismarck Archipelago was that it predominantly happened at sea. B. Macdonald has noted that in the Gilbert (Kiribati) and Ellice (Tuvalu) Islands (where there were few good anchorages), trade took place on ship rather than on shore because from the whalers' point of view it was quicker, much safer, and the initiative remained with them rather than with the islanders.²⁴ There is a clear parallel with the Solomon Islands, where before 1820 whalers traded with canoes only at sea.²⁵ This hesitancy to go on shore can be seen in the experience of the *Resource*, the American trader which ventured into the region in 1799, when off the coast of New Ireland.

at 3 pm had the 2 boats on shore well armed ... the surf so high that they thought most prudent not to continue on shore. The natives swam off to the edge of the surf threw coconuts to them ... this manoeuvring was similar to that of when we landed in 1794 & was obliged to kill 12 of them before they would disperse, and I believe had our boats tried landed at this time they would had a lesson with them. They are a mean set of the largest men all together I ever have met with their weapons, is a club of 4 feet long a hatch a tomahawk their complexion is a light brown and long black hair their nose rather flat and their appearance to support them a hostile set of people.²⁶

Apprehension and fear played a predominant role in the early period of contact and trade, with particularly Buka and Bougainville being avoided as much as possible for beach trading.²⁷ Yet throughout the entire period trade was carried out on shore in the Trobriands. In fact, in the Bismarcks a surprising amount of barter was completed on shore and this was linked directly to whalers' perceptions of known and safe places. Islanders travelled long distances to trade both over land²⁸ and out to sea. Travelling nine kilometres out was common,²⁹ with the longest distance recorded being 25 kilometres from Gower's Harbour and a similar

²⁴ B. Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire, Towards a History of Kiribati and Tuvalu* (Canberra 1982), 17.

²⁵ Bennett, *The Wealth*, 24–5.

²⁶ *Resource*, Sun. 6 Oct. 1799, San Francisco Maritime Museum, PMB 790. The reference to 1794 indicates that either the log keeper had been in the Bismarcks in 1794 in another ship, or that the same ship had been there on a previous voyage, or had called at the same place earlier during the present voyage.

²⁷ When the *General Scott* did venture on shore at Buka in 1860 they 'found them very wild panic struck again'. See *General Scott*, 24 Jan. 1860, Kendall Whaling Museum, PMB 809.

²⁸ The *Lusitania*, Wed. 11 Feb. 1829, at Carteret harbour, logged that natives had travelled overland a great distance bringing with them one hog which they exchanged for an old whaling lance.

²⁹ See, e.g., *James Arnold*, 16 Sept. 1858 off Buka, Old Dartmouth Whaling Museum, PMB 260.

distance from New Ireland into the St George's Channel in 1872: 'a canoe came from New Ireland some 15 miles from shore, all they bought off to sell was 2 eggs and 7 coconuts & 6 taro & 4 shells'.³⁰ In 1860, the *Mohawk* recorded that some islanders off Cape Denis spent the night on board and their canoe was hoisted up onto the ship because they were so far from the shore.³¹ Huge numbers of islanders would often converge on whale ships, whose decks would instantaneously be transformed into markets.³² Upwards of 50 canoes were often alongside, with a couple of hundred islanders.³³

In most instances the initial period of trade was difficult and often dominated by misunderstanding, not only about the danger of attack,³⁴ but what was actually being sought. T. Beale wrote of a situation where

a number of canoes came off ... the captain ordered 2 boats to be manned and sent to them ... I wore at the time a small white calico riding cap ... and I placed it on the head of one of the men who appeared to be the chief, the effect was instantaneous; a yell of satisfaction from the assembled multitude arose. We set about endeavouring to make them understand that we wanted either fresh animal or vegetable ... but failed to show them this.³⁵

All sorts of information, real or imaginary, was passed between whalers at sea when the ships met or at the ports around the Pacific and at home on the eastern seaboard of America, and this had a strong influence on the trading relationship between islanders and whalers. But it was rarely constant. For example, in 1806 the Salem trader *Eliza* wrote of the islanders of Buka 'the men ... appeared friendly', yet by 1863 the perception of the *Massachusetts* was 'from appearances they are a savage and treacherous race', and by 1871 the *Arctic* recorded 'the natives came alongside in canoes one at a time being allowed alongside ... as they will attack the ship in a very short time'.³⁶ The differences could be explained by Wilson's comment in the log of the *Gypsy* in 1840.

The natives of Bougainville seldom or never come off to the ships afraid to venture near vessels the like of which have vomited forth lightning and death. The natives of Bouka it is who come off and by treating them fairly with a pretty constant supply of refreshments can be depended on while cruising there ... [The straits of Buka is] beset with large shoals and is not navigable. A Sydney whaler was lost in this bay and abandoned by her crew. She was speedily taken possession of by the natives and plundered. Subsequently to that it was to be the custom with vessels from *that Port* to fire at natives on approaching the ship in their canoes, sinking them, and wounding and killing the natives! Owing to that they were deterred from coming off to the ships, a serious drawback as pigs are scarce on New Ireland, and vegetables obtained with much risk and trouble. Now, however, they venture off but approach with caution, but

³⁰ A. R. Tucker, 23 and 29 Oct. 1872, PMB 802.

³¹ *Mohawk*, Tuc. 4 Sept. 1860, PMB 390.

³² *Lusitania*, 4 Jan. 1829, in the Duke of Yorks.

³³ See *Lusitania*, Thur. 20 Nov. and Mon. 29 Dec. 1828, in the Duke of Yorks. *Clarice* on 3 May 1844 reported 50 canoes alongside, New Bedford Free Public Library, PMB 319.

³⁴ James Arnold, 4 Sept. 1858 off Bougainville, PMB 260.

³⁵ T. Beale, *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (London 1839), 301-2.

³⁶ *Eliza*, Wed. May 28 1806, Peabody Museum, PMB 217; *Massachusetts*, Tuc. Feb. 17 1863, New Bedford Free Public Library, PMB 349; *Arctic*, Sat. Dec. 2 1871, Nicholson Whaling Collection, PMB 791.

having once become satisfied that no harm is intended them, they come off whenever there is an opportunity.³⁷

Perceptions differed for every place. The *Massachusetts* on a previous voyage had logged that the Admiralty Islanders 'do not appear to [be] very savage'.³⁸ The *Stafford* considered the people of the Woodlarks to be very friendly,³⁹ which accounts for the high proportion of trade that occurred there on shore.

Other striking features of barter developed. Some islanders were deserted by their fellows, 'with the intention to fetch on board some pigs but they did not return so had the natives on board all night, at day light canoes began to come off but they bought no pigs did not trade with them put out three boarders into one of the canoes'.⁴⁰ However, when it became clear that they were not allowed on board, islanders did not stay.⁴¹ At times elaborate exchanges took place. The surgeon on board the British whaler *Coronet* reported in 1838, 'while cruising here every day that we stood in towards land, and several canoes came off to us & the natives bought with them cocoanuts, Yams, Taro, Sugar cane, Arrows, Spears, clubs, shells, Tortoise Shell, nuts, calabashes, and many other articles which they gave for small pieces of iron hoop, balls of cotton, strips of red shirt & such like objects'.⁴²

From the beginning and throughout the trading period coconuts were one of the most important trade items. They provided some variety in the diet of the crew and were also used to feed the pigs that were kept on board.⁴³ Root crops, yams and taro were eagerly asked for and just as vociferously pressed on the whalers. In addition, a wide range of fruits, bananas, plantains, 'apples', tropical fruits, 'almonds' and watermelons were exchanged at times. Pigs were bought on the beach or paddled out in canoes to the ships to be bartered. Less frequently chickens, sugar-cane and fish were exchanged.⁴⁴

There was rapid expansion in the making of handicrafts, with the sale of baskets, clubs, spears, bows and arrows, shells and fish hooks. Some of these were used on board but most were traded as a sideline and taken home as 'curiosities' to America and Europe. The captain's wife on board the *A. R. Tucker* recorded that in addition to food her husband traded for bracelets, beads, spears, bows and arrows, miniature canoes, and other ornaments. He even traded a pig so that she could have a ship-board pet. Some of these were rare goods, and of some value, which suggests that by the 1870s the trading relationships were changing and that a measure of dependence was emerging, with islanders now exchanging goods of indigenous value that were not surpluses such as food. Whalers, however, predom-

³⁷ The log of D. Parker Wilson, the surgeon/log-keeper on the British whaler *Gypsy*, in Whittaker, *Documents*, 324.

³⁸ *Massachusetts*, Thur. 8 Nov. 1849, Kendall Whaling Museum, PMB 813.

³⁹ *Stafford*, Mon. 8 Sept. 1862, Kendall Whaling Museum, PMB 957.

⁴⁰ *Palmetto*, 6 Mar. 1881 at Lihir, Old Dartmouth Whaling Museum, PMB 250.

⁴¹ *A. R. Tucker* at New Hanover, 'Daniel traded with them bought some ... bracelets and beads ... and a piece of music made of bamboo, they are very noisy but do not stop round the ship long at a time if they cannot come on deck'. 9 Oct. 1872.

⁴² *Coronet*, the British whaler, between Tabar and New Ireland, Feb. 1838, Whaling Museum, Nantucket, PMB 375.

⁴³ Macdonald, *Cinderellas*, 17.

⁴⁴ See Gray, 'From Windfall', Appendix 2.

inantly traded for subsistence, with little, if any, further economic interest at stake except perhaps for the purchase of tortoiseshell, which could be re-sold for high returns elsewhere, and was a common commodity of exchange.

Different goods were received and traded at different islands. In the Trobriands, it was yams, which were the only edible item given other than coconuts. The Admiralties traded in everything except pigs and fruit. The same was the case for Green Islanders (Nissan), who throughout the 85 years traded in everything from taro to tortoiseshell, but not pigs or fruit. It can only be surmised that either they did not exist there, or they were not considered surplus and were too valuable to trade. Trading in the Woodlarks was almost exclusively in yams, while in tiny Lihir and Tabar virtually every available foodstuff and artifact was traded throughout. Lihir came to the whalers' attention only towards the end of the era. Initially, yams were virtually the only product offered at Tanga but as the instances of contact increased trade items became more diverse. On the other hand at New Hanover, which first experienced the whalers' trade as late as 1870, a very wide range of products was on offer. Feni was infrequently contacted throughout the period and traded in 'potatoes', coconuts, yams, and fruit but not pigs.

On Buka the most traded item was taro, which gradually diversified to include pigs and tortoiseshell. At Bougainville, where there was less trade overall, both taro and tortoiseshell predominated. The Duke of Yorks, because of their central position and friendly reputation, had numerous trading contacts and traded in all items, notably in fowls.

New Britain was largely avoided as a source of trade throughout the period, but what trade did occur happened mainly around Blanche Bay and was in a wide range of products. New Ireland was overwhelmingly the location of the greatest amount of trade and all along its 500 kilometre north and south coasts all items were offered for barter, including coconuts, pigs, fruit, taro, yams, tortoiseshell, trinkets, plantains, pumpkins and even eggs.

Specific items were sought by the whalers only to the south of the Archipelago at the Trobriands. This may have been because of the availability of the goods rather than the whalers' demands. There appears to have been growing diversity in the range of trade, and while there were not so much specific changes in the goods that were traded from different islands, there was an increasing transition in the demands as contact became more regularised. It must also be remembered that what was traded, and from where, had a great deal to do with the ship doing the trading. The *Young Hector* in 1854 traded throughout the whole Archipelago, but only in yams. Similarly the *James Arnold*, trading for a number of weeks in 1858 in Bougainville, demanded only taro and tortoiseshell.

On the islanders' side, iron had always been the most sought after item. The crew of the *Lusitania* in 1829 were dismayed to learn that the coffin of a crew member whom they had recently buried had been exhumed and the nails removed.⁴⁵ Hoop iron used in the manufacture of casks was readily available and cheap and proved popular because of its versatility. Its trading value could be

⁴⁵ *Lusitania*, 11 Feb. 1829.