

Alternative Prehistories for Bougainville: Regional, National, or Micronational

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It is a feeling deep down in our hearts that Bougainville is totally different than PNG, geographically, culturally. It's been a separate place from time immemorial. Ever since God created the Universe, Bougainville has been separate, has been different.

FORMER NORTH SOLOMONS PREMIER JOSEPH KABUI
17 MAY 1991

There is no historical basis for Bougainville as an independent nation. Bougainville, like any other Province, is a colonial creation for convenience of administration. There is no such tribe as Bougainville.

PNG MINISTER OF JUSTICE BERNARD NAROKOBI
7 AUGUST 1991

Prehistory matters in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea (PNG), or Bougainville as it is still commonly known. As the epigraphs suggest, it is also contested ground.

That prehistory (simply meaning here that part of history where the primary sources are not written) matters, was brought home to me by a trivial incident that occurred on 8 January 1990 at the North Solomons Provincial Government headquarters in Arawa. I had gone to buy a snack at the small coffee shop there, and on my way in I saw then Premier Joseph Kabui standing outside. He hailed me, and I walked over.

At the time, there was a state of emergency in force, sometimes fierce fighting in the hills behind town between the PNG Defence Force and the

Bougainville Republican¹ Army guerrillas, and increasingly public concern over disturbing incidents of human rights abuses by the Defence Force. I had already witnessed a general tendency of PNG soldiers at checkpoints on the outskirts of town to call Bougainvilleans “niggers” or “black bastards” and otherwise make passing through such checkpoints an unpleasant and sometimes harrowing experience. Kabui, as member of the Provincial Assembly for the area of the Panguna mine and from a land-owning family of that area, was under tremendous pressure from both sides in the conflict. He was already publicly calling for PNG troops to be withdrawn as a way of ending the bloodshed and destruction of property that were occurring on a daily basis. A few days later the PNG Parliament voted amid rousing cheers from the members to extend the state of emergency and order an all-out assault on rebel forces.

I was somewhat surprised that in such circumstances the premier even recognized me, but what he wanted to talk about was even more unexpected. He thanked me for sending him some months before offprints of some academic articles that dealt with aspects of North Solomons prehistory. One of them was a paper announcing archaeologist Stephen Wickler’s excavation of a twenty-eight-thousand-year-old occupation site on Buka Island (Wickler and Spriggs 1988). “Great work, so we’ve been here for twenty-eight thousand years. That’s amazing.” He continued in this vein for a short while before rushing off to attend to more pressing matters.

While I certainly don’t consider a deep interest in prehistory to be unhealthy, I was at the time amazed that a man whose province was in flames and whose relatives were being chased around the bush by the national army of the country would even recall the somewhat esoteric results of archaeological research.

Some seven months later I was again reminded of Premier Kabui’s interest in prehistory. This was after PNG troops had been forced to withdraw from the province, independence had been declared unilaterally, Papua New Guinea had imposed a total blockade of the North Solomons, and peace talks between the rebel Interim Government of Bougainville and PNG negotiators had begun aboard a New Zealand navy ship in Kieta harbor.

In an interview given at that time, but which I can no longer trace, Kabui started off with a statement something like: “Bougainville was independent for twenty-eight thousand years. Then the Germans came, then

the Australians, then the Japanese, then the Americans, then the Australians again, then Papua New Guinea. Now we are independent again.”

My experience of conducting archaeological research in the North Solomons since 1984 (on Nissan, Buka, and the Bougainville mainland) has been that people generally are particularly interested in learning about their past compared with other parts of the Pacific where I have worked. When Stephen Wickler and I gave a public lecture on Bougainville prehistory in Arawa in 1987, people drove into town from as far away as Buka, over four hours and a car-ferry ride away, to hear what we had to say. When I sought treatment for a minor ailment at the North Solomons Medical Centre, the Bougainvillean doctor on duty was far more concerned to discuss what interested him: “Why are we black and we are surrounded by redskins?”—*redskins* being a term used pejoratively by the generally extremely dark-skinned Bougainvilleans to describe people from other parts of Papua New Guinea (Nash and Ogan 1990). My ailment was forgotten until I reminded him of it at the end of the consultation. The 25 kina examination fee, sadly, was not.

Even before the current crisis, the questions of cultural and ethnic difference from other parts of Papua New Guinea were of obvious concern to Bougainvilleans. Just prior to the first unilateral declaration of independence in September 1975, Leo Hannett said, “Ethnically Bougainvilleans are obviously different from Papuans and New Guineans. We are generally jet black people having common ancestry with more people down west Solomons rather than any groups in PNG” (Hannett 1975, 290; see also Hannett 1969, 12). Now these perceived differences form the basis of the secessionist claims for independence, raised most recently before the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations by Joseph Kabui, now the chairman of the Interim Government on Bougainville (see Dialogue section, this issue.—Ed). Kabui’s claims before this committee provoked PNG Minister for Justice Bernard Narokobi’s remarks quoted in the epigraph.

ALTERNATIVE PREHISTORIES

Researchers are always faced with choices of modes of presentation and interpretation of their data, questions of the appropriate units or scales of analysis, and their own subjective “feelings” about the meaning of results, which are always underdetermined by the data and are often contentious.

A crisis like Bougainville's, where increasing appeal is being made to the evidence of prehistory and history, brings into sharper relief the difficulties faced in the process of creating a history (it is never re-creating). Writing prehistory or history "when it matters" forces one to confront issues that are there but that we prefer to forget or at least to handle subconsciously as part of the creative process.

At the 1983 Pacific Science Congress Sir Edmund Leach issued a timely warning on the political implications of writing Pacific prehistory:

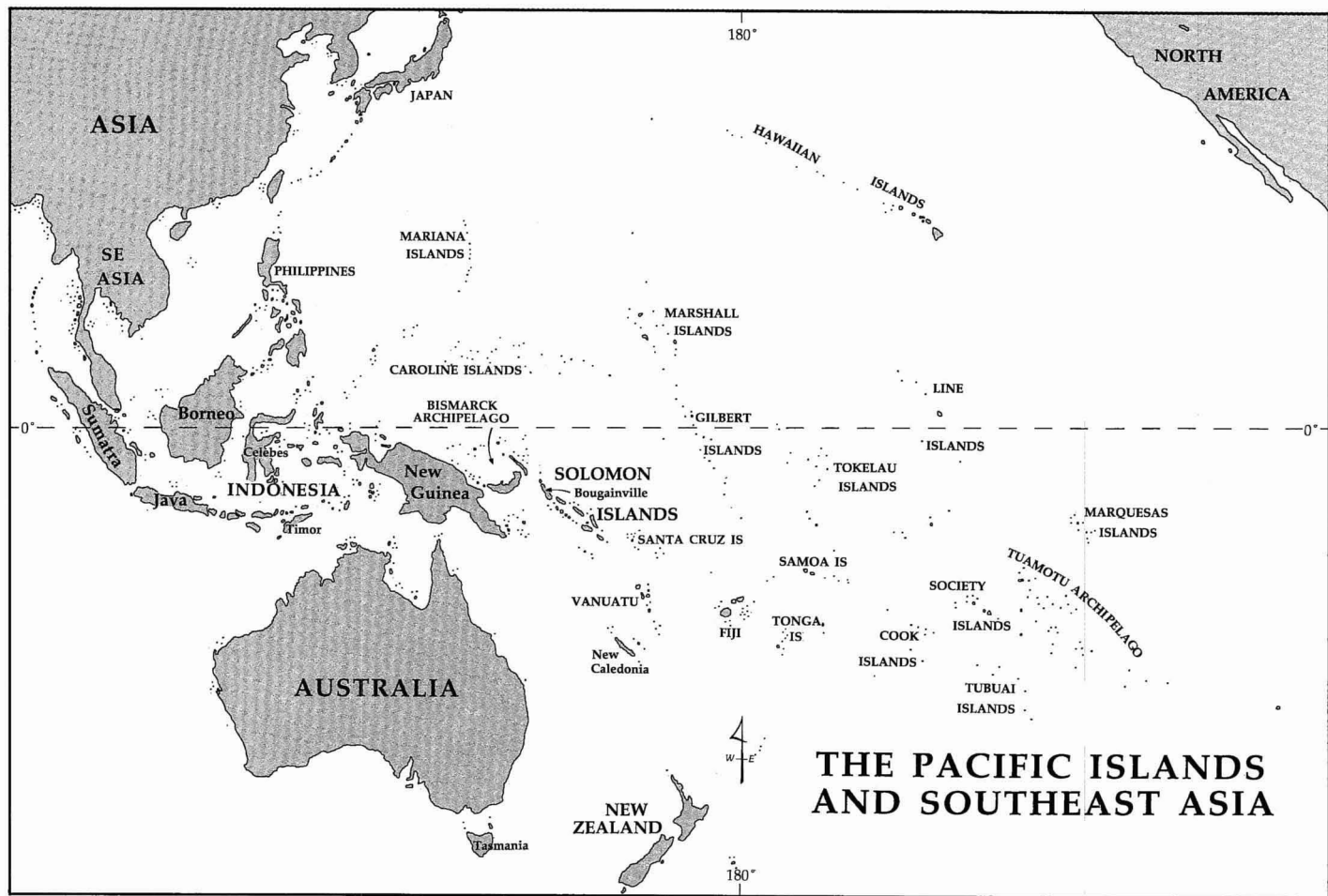
local archaeologists and ethno-historians are not just exploring the past in a detached objective scientific atmosphere. They are creating something which relates to the political present and the political future. On that account, without prejudice to their academic honesty, they need to be careful how they present their findings. . . .

Prehistorians of all kinds are temperamentally either lumpers or splitters. Lumpers go for broad generalizations and grand-scale continuities. Splitters always want to break up the total field into more and more discontinuous bits. . . . Translated into political terms the splitters are, unknowingly, encouraging the development of small scale local nationalisms. The lumpers are, with equal innocence, encouraging the development of a pan-Pacific sense of Polynesian solidarity. It is a value judgement as to which, if either, is the more desirable but there is no "truth" or "falsity" in these matters. It is an option of presentation. (Leach 1984, 100)

Part of this presentation depends on how the maps are drawn, and is not wholly a question of scale. On a map of the Pacific and Southeast Asia, Bougainville clearly sits to the western side, part of a belt of often quite large islands stretching from Sumatra and Borneo through New Guinea to the Solomons. Beyond the Solomons to the south and east, island size tends to decrease and the remoteness of individual archipelagoes increases dramatically (map 1).

On a map of Melanesia, a purely cultural rather than a "natural" geographic entity, Bougainville's position as the largest island of the Solomons archipelago is clear, as is the separation of the Solomons from New Britain and New Ireland in the Bismarck archipelago (map 2).

A map of the geographical Solomons emphasizes this separation (map 3). It would be hard to draw any further obvious boundary within the main Solomons chain, but other maps can be drawn, emphasizing the current political boundary between Bougainville and its satellite islands of the



MAP 1. The location of Bougainville within the Pacific.



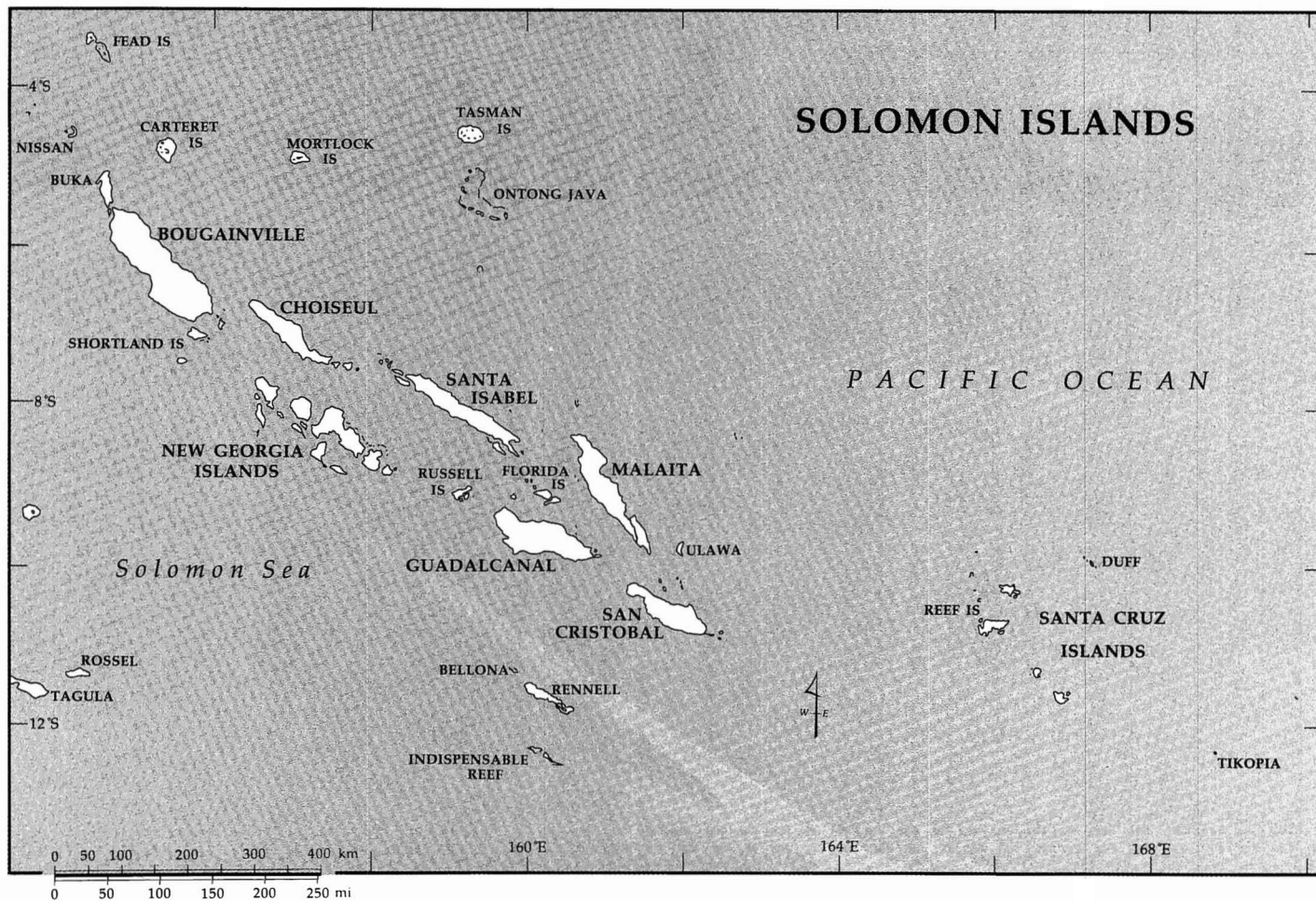
MAP 2. Bougainville within Melanesia.

Shortlands (map 4). On that map the islands linking Bougainville and New Ireland become more prominent. Cut adrift from the rest of the Solomons, which are not pictured, links to the rest of the nation of Papua New Guinea are stressed.

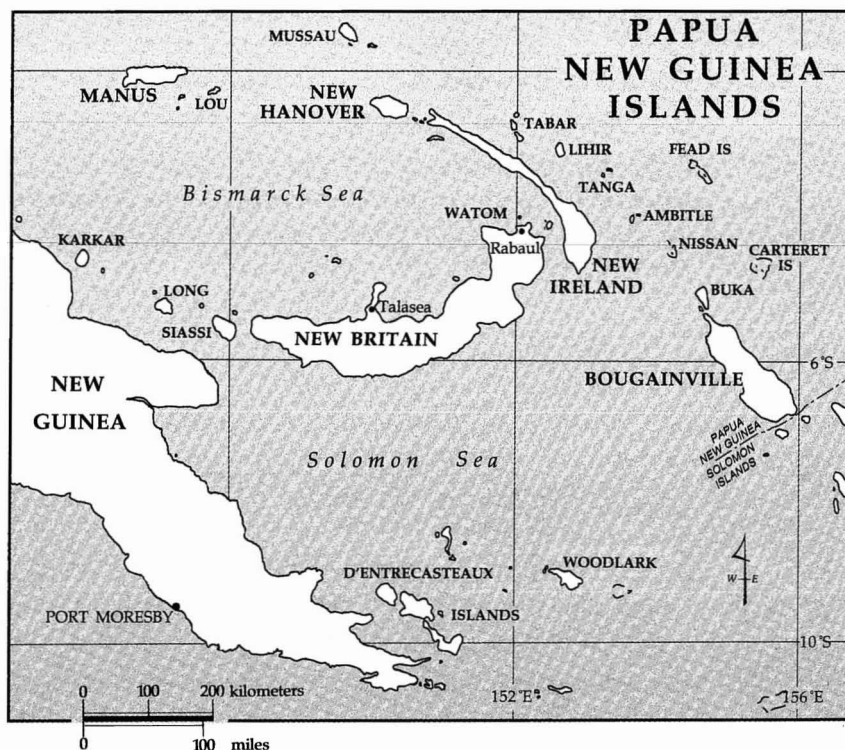
The separate foci of maps 3 and 4 do not depend on scale for their very different effects on our perceptions of the space in which Bougainville is situated. At an even more focused level (map 5), Bougainville is an entity in its own right, not clearly related to anywhere beyond itself.

Regional prehistories also can be written according to these different scales and boundaries. Prehistories of the Pacific might include most of the area on map 1, though usually with only passing reference to China and Japan (Bellwood 1978; Shutler and Shutler 1975). Melanesia (map 2) is a somewhat vague entity, based partly on a superficial appreciation of physiognomy in the "black islands" and partly created as a residual category: the parts of the island Pacific that are not Polynesia or Micronesia. Melanesia has no linguistic unity (unlike Polynesia), and its definition ethnically is only in contrast to the more genetically homogeneous populations in Polynesia, Australia, and, to a lesser extent, Micronesia.

A slightly more focused entity is Island Melanesia, Melanesia excluding the large island of New Guinea which was, until about 8000 BP (before



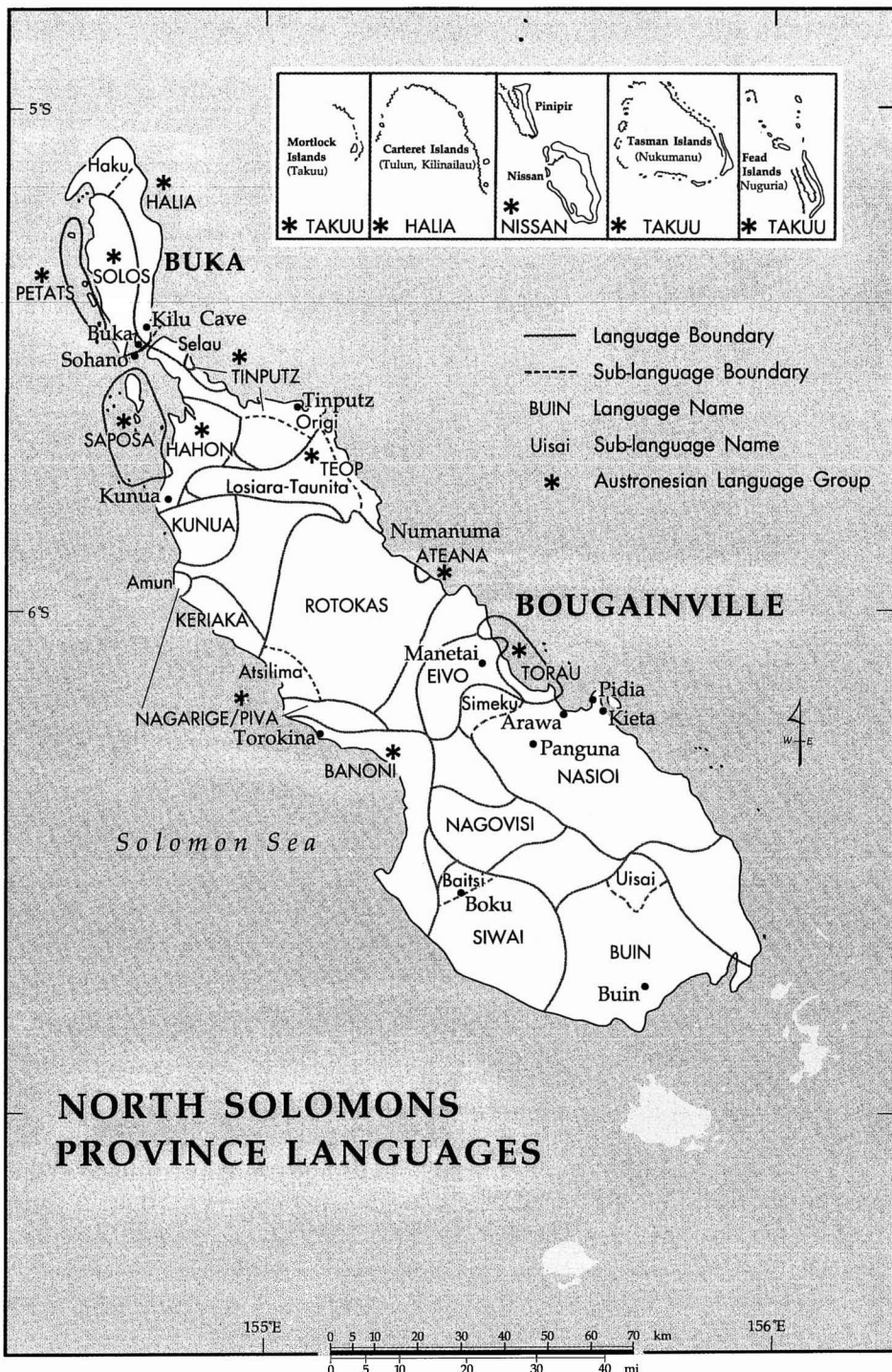
MAP 3. The Solomons archipelago showing Bougainville as its largest island.



MAP 4. Bougainville and the Bismarck archipelago, within Papua New Guinea.

present), joined to Australia. An argument can be made for such an entity having historical value for the last three thousand or so years (Spriggs 1992). If future research concludes that Vanuatu and New Caledonia were, like the Solomons and the Bismarcks, first settled long before that time, then a much longer unity might be posited. Fiji's position is somewhat anomalous. It is sometimes considered Polynesian with a more recent Melanesian overlay, and it is certainly much closer geographically to the nearest Polynesian islands than it is to other Melanesian ones. The reality or not of "Melanesia" is the subject of recent attempts at deconstruction (Green 1991; Thomas 1989)

Under an even finer focus, archipelagic prehistories can certainly be written, and, in many cases in the Pacific, these would be histories corresponding to colonial and later national boundaries, as is the case in Melanesia for Fiji, New Caledonia, and Vanuatu. The position of the Santa Cruz group is somewhat anomalous, being fairly remote from either Vanuatu or the main Solomons, and with past cultural connections to



MAP 5. The North Solomons and its languages.

both. In such an archipelagic prehistory Bougainville would clearly be considered part of the Solomons.

It would be possible also to construct such a prehistory for the Bismarck archipelago: New Britain, New Ireland, and Manus. The fieldwork concentration of the 1984–1985 Australian National University–National Geographic Lapita Homeland Project would tend to validate such an entity (Allen, Gosden, and White 1989; Gosden et al. 1989). The Bismarck archipelago, unlike the Solomons, is all in one country, but it forms only part of it. A New Guinea prehistory could relate to just the island of that name or, given the pre-8000 BP geography, to Australia as well, making up the former continent of Sahul (White and O'Connell 1982).

National prehistories can, of course, also be constructed at this level. *Ples Blong Iumi* 'Our Place' is a prehistory and history of the nation of Solomon Islands written by indigenous scholars (Laracy 1989). It only mentions Bougainville in passing and uses none of the results of archaeological research there for the light it might throw on the prehistory of this little-researched country. PNG national prehistories have been constructed that incorporate Bougainville into a story concentrating mainly on the eastern half of the New Guinea mainland (Egloff and Egloff 1978; Swadling 1981).

Very different Bougainville prehistories can be written by focusing on Bougainville within the Pacific, Bougainville in its connections to the south as part of the Solomons archipelago, and Bougainville in its connections to the north as part of a national PNG prehistory. The sketches that follow are not intended as outline prehistories but solely as indicators of the kinds of evidence that might be pertinent in constructing such prehistories. Differing emphases on particular lines of evidence that are brought into play in such construction are also stressed. Yet further prehistories can be imagined and built.

I have tried to suppress unnecessary repetition of "facts" and references among the versions given, and have drawn freely on a series of recent papers that contain extensive bibliographies (Spriggs 1991, 1992, in press *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*). These papers are not further referenced in the following sketches.

BOUGAINVILLE IN THE PACIFIC

The settlement of the North Solomons more than twenty-eight thousand years ago (Wickler and Spriggs 1988; Wickler 1990) was part of the great

expansion of modern humans out of Asia that began more than fifty-five thousand years ago. Although earlier sites than the Kilu site on Buka have been found in Australia, New Guinea, and on New Ireland, this does not mean that there was necessarily any great time lag in settlement. Only one Pleistocene site has been excavated in the North Solomons, indeed in all the Solomons, and earlier sites may yet be found.

The earliest settlers were hunter-gatherers, users of a rather amorphous flaked stone tool assemblage such as was common in Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Guinea at that time. At least at the period of the glacial maximum at 17,000 BP, many of the main Solomon islands were joined as one large island, "Greater Bougainville," and the rest were easily visible across comparatively short sea gaps. It would be most surprising therefore if further Pleistocene settlement south of Buka did not remain to be discovered by archaeologists.

Whether the islands of Remote Oceania beyond San Cristobal were settled early is not known. As yet there is no evidence for settlement of Santa Cruz, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Fiji, and Polynesia prior to 3200–3000 BP.

These first settlements in Remote Oceania are associated with the Lapita culture, the most widespread cultural horizon in the Pacific. Lapita sites are found from Manus and New Britain in the west to Tonga and Samoa in the east. The earliest Lapita sites date to about 3600 BP, the latest in some areas to 2000 BP or even later. Within the North Solomons, Lapita sites have been found on Nissan and Buka.

Lapita sites are characterized by a very distinctive dentate stamped pottery, the first appearance in the island Pacific of domestic pig, dog, and chicken, and a range of nut trees and other domesticated plants. Distinctive stone adze forms and shell ornaments are also associated with them, as is the first evidence of village-sized settlements, including some consisting of stilt-houses built out on reef flats. Earlier trade networks are greatly extended at this time, with obsidian from the Talasea sources on New Britain spread as far as Fiji to the east and Sabah in Borneo to the west (Bellwood and Koon 1989). Lou Island obsidian from Manus is found as far south as Vanuatu.

The Lapita sites in the North Solomons are fairly typical, with evidence for external trade in the form of obsidian, stone adzes, and (for Nissan at least) pottery. The earliest Nissan Lapita pottery appears to have come from the north, with later imports from Buka to the south.

One interpretation of Lapita is that it represents a migration of people

from island Southeast Asia. Many aspects of Lapita material culture can be traced back to the Philippines and Taiwan. The distribution of Austronesian (AN) languages in the region and that of Lapita are basically coincident, suggesting that the Lapita colonists spoke AN languages ancestral to those spoken widely in the region today (cf Bellwood 1984). Ross's (1988, 1989) analysis of Western Oceanic languages suggests that the current AN languages of the North Solomons relate to later events, representing replacement of languages of Central East Oceanic type such as are spoken today farther south in the Solomons chain (labeled Southeast Solomonic in map 6).

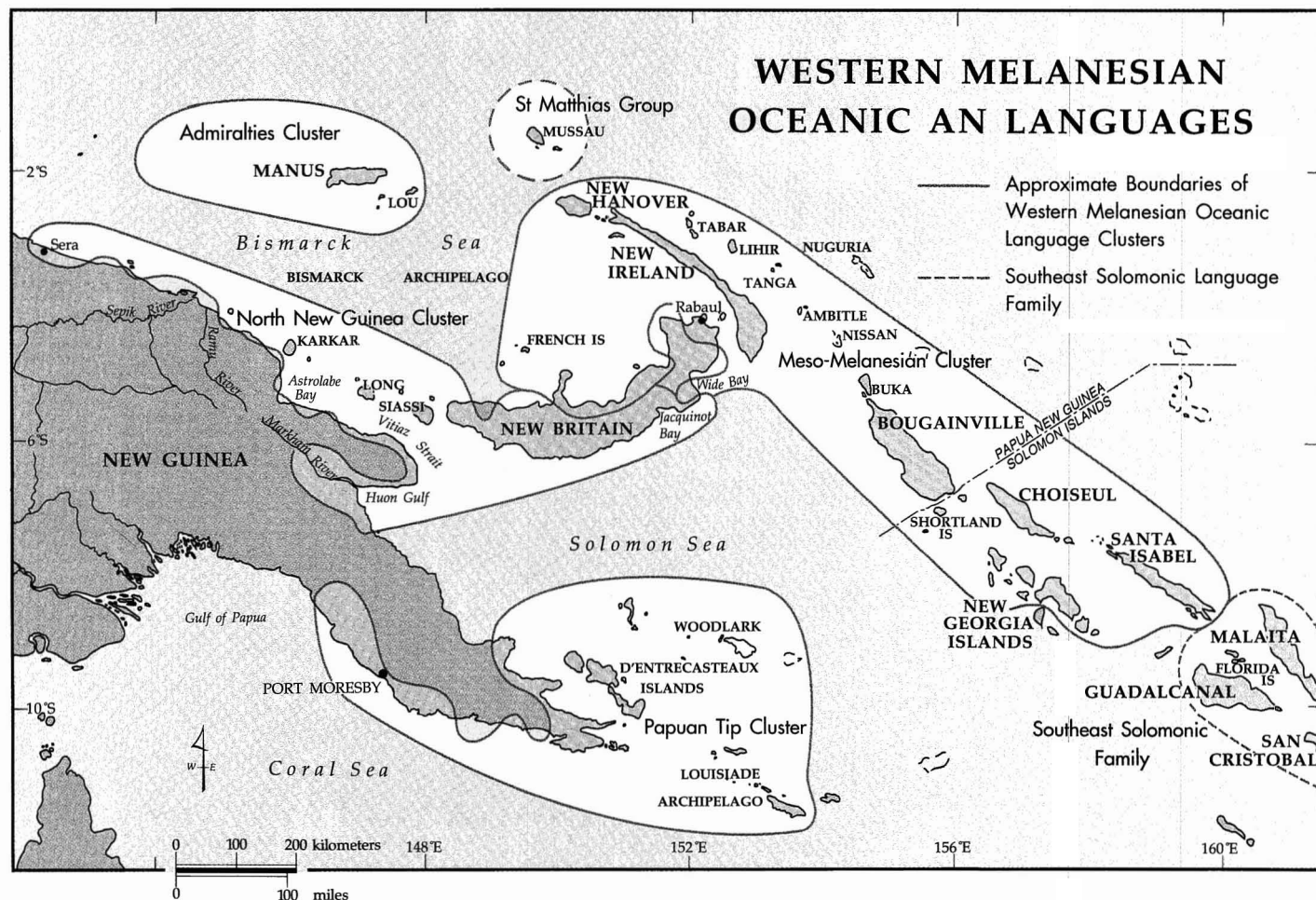
This replacement might relate to another archaeological phenomenon found in the immediate post-Lapita period, when a series of probably related incised and applied relief pottery styles are encountered in New Britain, Manus (Puian ware), New Ireland (Lossu or Lasigi style), Buka (Sohano and Hangan styles), New Georgia, Vanuatu (Mangaasi), New Caledonia (Oundjo style), and Fiji (Navatu and Vuda phases). References to the literature on these can be found in Spriggs (1992) and, for Fiji, Frost (1979).

The post-Lapita changes may represent a second movement of people from the Bismarck area, the old Lapita "homeland," but if so the linguistic signature stops to the south of Bougainville at the Tryon-Hackman line at the southern end of Santa Isabel—the boundary between Meso-Melanesian Cluster and Southeast Solomonic family languages. Alternatively, the changes may represent the continuation of the Lapita exchange network in attenuated form, with cultures in contact producing changes of pottery style "in sync."

Trade networks linking Bougainville to north and south have continued since at least Lapita times with a variety of specialist products moving along them: shell money, pottery, ornaments, mineral paint, obsidian, and weapons.

BOUGAINVILLE IN SOLOMON ISLANDS PREHISTORY

After initial settlement of Buka sometime prior to 28,000 BP, there is no evidence of further important links between the Solomons and the Bismarcks until the Lapita period in the second millennium BC. A partial exception is on Nissan, a culturally contested border region until the last eight hundred years or so when it became more closely linked with the



MAP 6. The four clusters of Western Melanesian Oceanic AN languages (*after* Ross 1988).

Solomons. During much of the Pleistocene, Buka and Bougainville were joined as one island and at times of lowest sea level, particularly around 17,000 BP, they were further joined to the Shortlands, Choiseul, Santa Isabel, and the Florida Group to form "Greater Bougainville." A narrow channel would have separated this enormous island from Guadalcanal. Even with lower sea levels, however, distances to the Bismarcks would have remained about the same.

Canarium is thought to represent a nut tree introduced from farther north, but its first appearance at the Kilu site on Buka at about 9000 BP is an artifact of sampling. No macroscopic charcoal, from which the *Canarium* fragments have been identified, is preserved in earlier deposits at the site. It could therefore have been introduced by the original settlers.

A bone of the humanly introduced possum, *Phalanger orientalis*, was also found in levels at Kilu dating to about 9000 BP (Wickler 1990). It is possible, however, that it was displaced from upper levels. Significantly, only a single bone of this species, native to New Guinea and introduced to New Ireland in the Pleistocene, was found in a deposit rich in faunal remains.

The endemic mammal fauna of the North Solomons is quite different from that of New Ireland, and considerably richer (Flannery and White 1991; Flannery and Wickler 1990). It included five endemic rat species of the genera *Melomys* and *Solomys*. All five were eaten by the early inhabitants of Buka, along with local birds, reptiles, and marine fish and shellfish.

The Kilu site shows that Buka did not participate in the significant economic changes that occurred to the north in the Pleistocene and Early Holocene sites of New Ireland: importation of Talasea obsidian from 19,000 BP on, the introduction from New Guinea and hunting of *Phalanger orientalis* (again from 19,000 BP on), the wallaby *Thylogale brunii* (from 7000 BP), and the rodent *Rattus praetor* from 8000 BP (see Allen, Gosden, and White 1989 and Flannery and White 1991 for details).

The earliest evidence for human occupation of Nissan at about 6000 BP does include *Phalanger* and Talasea obsidian; this island can be viewed as an outlier of New Ireland at that time. Nissan is a raised atoll of Pleistocene age, and it is not clear whether it was emergent and habitable before the Holocene period. An important stepping-stone island between the Bismarcks and the Solomons would have been missing if it was not. This

would have further isolated the Solomons, as regular voyaging across 130 kilometers of open ocean via Ambitle (Feni group) or 180 kilometers direct from New Ireland is unlikely at this early period.

The Non-Austronesian (NAN) languages of the North Solomons appear to be descended from those of the initial settlers. Wurm (1982) has claimed some distant affinity between them and the NAN languages spoken in the Bismarcks as part of an East Papuan Phylum. The time scale involved, however, would make it highly unlikely that any putative ancestral commonality would be detectable. In a recent survey of NAN languages, Foley (1986, 3) makes it clear that NAN itself is merely a residual category of languages in the area that are not Austronesian. The sixty or so NAN language families are not necessarily related in any way, and Foley rejects Wurm's higher level subgroupings as unproven and premature given the current state of our knowledge (1986, 213).

One of the NAN families Foley recognizes is the South Bougainville family of Nasioi, Buin, Siwai, and Nagovisi. He suggests this is probably related to a smaller North Bougainville family (Eivo, Rotokas, Keriaka, and Kunua) but hazards no wider connections (1986, 244–245). The location of these languages is given in map 5.

The Lapita expansion involved the North Solomons, as it did the rest of Island Melanesia. While the Bismarcks appear to be the immediate Lapita homeland, the origins of the culture are clearly in large part Southeast Asian. The earliest Lapita substyle, Far Western or Early Western, is limited to the Bismarcks, and it appears that for about four hundred years (from 3600 to 3200 BP) Buka and Bougainville formed a barrier to Lapita expansion.

Nissan again appears in its early role as a Bismarcks outlier, with a Lapita-like assemblage (lacking only pots) appearing there from 3600 BP on. This is as early as Lapita assemblages anywhere in the Bismarcks. The earliest Lapita pottery on Nissan at about 3200 BP is of Early Western style and probably came from Ambitle to the north.

With this exception, the first Lapita assemblages outside the Bismarcks are of the subsequent Western Lapita style. These include those from Buka (and later Nissan pottery), the Reef–Santa Cruz group in the eastern Solomons, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia. Stylistic analyses link the Buka and later Nissan Lapita pottery to the Reef–Santa Cruz sites rather than to those in the Bismarcks (Wickler 1990).

Over time many aspects of Lapita culture were taken up by NAN groups—domestic animals, possibly agriculture itself and certainly a range of new crops, and many items of material culture.

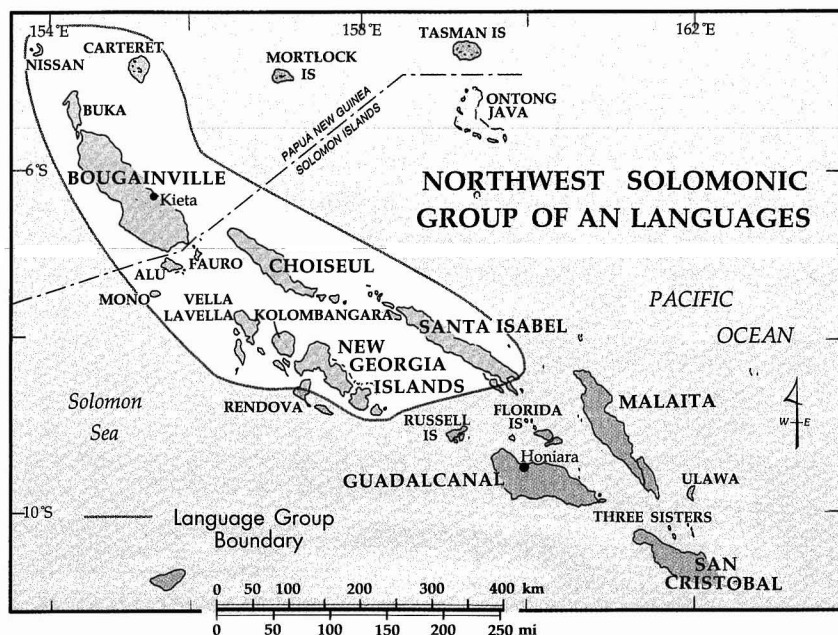
Extremely dark skin color, for which Bougainville is famous as the “black spot” of the Pacific, must go back much further than Lapita times. In such genetic features Bougainville’s distinctiveness and separation from Bismarcks and other PNG populations are most clear. Extremely dark skin color ends at Nissan, and Terrell has discussed this relative genetic isolation in terms of biogeographic models and the role of stepping-stone islands in regulating interaction between archipelagoes (1986, 140–141).

Friedlaender’s synthesis of the long-term Harvard study of health and human biology in the Solomons shows that while Bougainvillean populations are themselves biologically heterogeneous over short distances, they do hang together as a biological cluster when compared to other areas across the Pacific (1987, 351). This distinctive biological cluster is “not simply a genetically impoverished variant of New Guineans, as one might expect in a group a few hundred miles distant from that large population centre” (1987, 354). Indeed, “Bougainvillean populations have as much internal variability as much larger areas of New Guinea” (1987, 355), suggesting a very long period of isolation.

Friedlaender’s conclusions were prophetic in this respect. Published before the establishment of a Pleistocene prehistory for the North Solomons, he suggested human settlement of at least ten thousand years to develop such a degree of internal heterogeneity and distinctiveness (1987, 355). Friedlaender drew on some of the biogeographical principles used by Terrell to suggest that Bougainville is a logical place for the persistence of “relic” populations: “It is the largest of the Solomon Islands, and hence big enough to maintain long term population distinctiveness, and unlike New Britain, far enough away from New Guinea to escape being engulfed by population floods emanating from that natural centre of dispersal” (1987, 354).

Distinctive features such as dark skin color continue south into Choiseul and western provinces of Solomon Islands, but farther down the archipelago it seems that genetic admixture with incoming AN colonists has masked any earlier similarities.

A degree of isolation is also shown by the AN languages spoken in the North Solomons. Nissan is again the northernmost island for this phenomenon, the AN language subgroup known as Northwest Solomonian



MAP 7. The Northwest Solomonic Group of Oceanic AN languages (*after* Ross 1988).

(map 7). While Northwest Solomonic is part of Ross's (1988) wider Meso-Melanesian Cluster, it forms a tight grouping separable from Meso-Melanesian languages on New Ireland and New Britain. It consists of the AN languages of Nissan, Buka, Bougainville, the Shortlands, Choiseul, New Georgia, and Santa Isabel, and represents patterns of interaction and possibly migration in the post-Lapita period.

The area where Northwest Solomonic languages are spoken is also the only part of the main Solomons chain where pottery continued to be manufactured after the Lapita period. Pottery manufacture continued into the historic period on Buka, in Central and South Bougainville, the Shortlands, and Choiseul (May and Tuckson 1982). There is evidence too for post-Lapita pottery use and/or manufacture on several islands of the New Georgia group (Reeve 1989).

The pottery sequences of central and southern Bougainville, the Shortlands, and Choiseul show particularly close correspondence over the last sixteen hundred years, giving support to Terrell and Irwin's (1972) idea of a prehistoric "Bougainville Strait Interaction System." No sites earlier than 1600 BP have yet been found in the area. Terrell found that there

were particularly strong relations in late prehistory between the Shortland Islands and the Buin area of south Bougainville (1986, 225–238).

Tridacna armrings from Choiseul and shell money from farther south were important elements in traditional bride-price payments on Bougainville as far north as the Teop area. Farther north it is recorded that shell money was imported from the Bismarcks. This may have been a feature of the historic period, however, when as part of the colonial Territory of New Guinea exchange connections shifted to the north.

Exchange relations with New Ireland via Nissan were certainly never cut off in the post-Lapita period, but after 750 BP Nissan was much more clearly within the Buka sphere of influence. Its pottery supply now came from Buka rather than from the north, and many facets of Nissan material culture as recorded at European contact are first recognizable from this period.

While the AN and NAN groups in the North Solomons originally may have been distinct populations, over the last few thousand years any differences have broken down through marriage and other contacts. Items of material culture and agricultural practices derived from the Lapita culture became general over Bougainville, and many cultural institutions unite both AN and NAN groups. Thus, speakers of both language types in north Bougainville were traditionally united by the elaborate male initiation cult involving the *upe* hat, and by the practice of cannibalism. This practice was abhorred by southern Bougainville AN and NAN speakers who preferred head-hunting and shared variations of the religious *horomorum* concept (Oliver 1943). Matrilineal descent and the payment of bride-price are general on Bougainville and Buka.

So far, nothing has been said of the Polynesian outliers off the east coast of Bougainville: the atolls of Fead (Nuguria), Tasman (Nukumanu), and the Mortlocks (Takuu). No archaeology has yet been carried out on any of them, but surface collections have been made on the next outlier south of Nukumanu, Ontong Java (Luanguia), and excavations have taken place on several other outliers in the Solomons such as Anuta and Tikopia (Kirch 1984). Significantly, surface pottery from Ontong Java was sourced to Buka and other islands in the main Solomons chain. The Islanders speak Polynesian languages and probably represent back-migration from Polynesia within the last eight hundred years. The only Polynesian outliers north of the Fead Islands are Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi in Micronesia. Inhabitants of another North Solomons atoll group, the Carterets

(Tulun, Kilinailau) now speak a Buka language, and their oral traditions record conquest of a previously Polynesian population within the last few hundred years (NSPA 1960).

BOUGAINVILLE AND PNG PREHISTORY

The two major episodes of settlement of Bougainville originated from the direction of New Guinea and the Bismarck archipelago: initial settlement at some time prior to 28,000 BP and Lapita settlement from the Bismarcks Lapita "homeland" in the second millennium BC. The evidence for the culture of the initial settlers comes from the Kilu site on Buka where material culture and midden remains are similar to the assemblage from Matenkupkum on New Ireland at 33,000 BP (Allen, Gosden, and White 1989).

Settlement of the main island of New Guinea had occurred prior to 40,000 BP (Groube et al 1986), attested by a site on the Huon Peninsula of Morobe Province. The waisted axes from that site have parallels in the later polished waisted axes of Bougainville and finds farther south in the Solomons. It is unlikely that the differences in flora and fauna between the Bismarcks and Bougainville would have materially affected chances of successful human colonization.

We are presently missing the period from about 20,000 BP to 9000 BP in the Bougainville archaeological sequence, as Kilu was not occupied during that period. When the archaeological record resumes there is evidence of the use of nut tree species of the genus *Canarium*, which are thought to have been introduced, ultimately from the island of New Guinea, and deliberately transplanted to Buka.

A single bone of the possum *Phalanger orientalis*, found in 9000 BP levels at Kilu, is further evidence of introduced species. Ultimately again from New Guinea, the *Phalanger* appears to have been introduced to New Ireland by about 19,000 BP and is also known from the earliest site on Nissan at about 6000 BP. At the same site and time period Talasea obsidian is also present. Although pre-Lapita obsidian has not so far been found on Buka, our sample is at present only two sites and it may yet turn up in subsequent work. Buka is, of course, visible from Nissan only 64 kilometers to its north.

The initial settlers of Bougainville probably spoke languages ancestral to the NAN or Papuan languages found today in the interior of Bougainville Island. Although much more research needs to be done on these lan-

guages, Wurm (1982) tentatively included them in his East Papuan Phylum, linking them to Papuan languages in New Britain, New Ireland, Rossel Island in Milne Bay Province, and a few languages farther to the south in the Solomons.

Bougainville shows evidence for a second episode of colonization during the Lapita expansion. The earliest Lapita sites are known from the Bismarck archipelago. The origins of this culture are a subject of controversy, but at least some scholars believe that it is basically a development out of earlier Bismarcks cultures, while allowing that some features such as pottery may have a more westerly derivation (Allen and White 1989).

An early Lapita outlier is Nissan, where from about 3600 BP is found evidence of an assemblage characterized as "Lapita without pots." Full Lapita sites with pottery occur there from about 3200 BP. At the same time on Buka, Lapita sites are found representing villages of stilt houses out on the reefs. This is perhaps a token of an initially marginal occupation by an intrusive group. Similar stilt house Lapita sites are known from Mussau in New Ireland Province and from New Britain.

Lapita represents the introduction from the Bismarcks of domesticated fauna (pig, dog, chicken), the earliest evidence for a range of agricultural plant species, pottery, possibly obsidian (already on Nissan), fully polished stone adzes, the commensal rats *Rattus exulans* and *Rattus praetor*, and a range of shell ornament types which are still used today all over Bougainville in bride-price and other traditional payments. Some of the Lapita pottery in use on Nissan was almost certainly imported from the next island north, Ambitle in the Feni group.

Over time the use of the distinctive dentate-stamped Lapita designs declined, but new developments in pottery decoration in the Bismarcks at about 2500–2000 BP are paralleled in Bougainville. Pottery becomes generally a plain, shell-tempered ware (Buka style) but with some incised and applied relief decoration. These forms of decoration later become dominant in the Sohano and Hangan styles manufactured on Buka (Specht 1969), which are comparable to styles on New Ireland (Lossu/Lasigi style) and Manus (Puian ware). Most of the pottery on Nissan in the immediately post-Lapita period appears to be imported from the north, probably from New Ireland.

Ross (1989) has suggested that the homeland of Proto-Oceanic was on the north coast of New Britain in the general area of the Talasea obsidian

sources. He further hypothesizes two strands of AN settlement in Bougainville. The first, perhaps associated with the initial Lapita expansion, was swamped by a second wave of Meso-Melanesian Cluster languages.

All AN languages in Bougainville are of this second type, but some show traces of influence from the earlier AN migration. It is tempting to link the spread of the Meso-Melanesian Cluster languages, again seen by Ross as of New Britain origin, with the parallel changes in pottery styles in the region in the immediate post-Lapita period.

The important Bismarcks-Bougainville exchange network, channeled via Nissan, certainly continued post-Lapita. The finding of remains of a *Thylogale* on Buka in deposits dating to about 1800 BP is significant here. This small wallaby, of New Guinea origin, was introduced to New Ireland prior to 7000 BP (Flannery and White 1991). It is not extant in Bougainville today and perhaps arrived as a pet or as smoked meat on a trading canoe from farther north.

The obsidian trade continued to supply Buka until about 300 BP and Nissan until the beginning of the twentieth century. Armrings and shell money from the north, perhaps from as far away as Mussau or Manus, were part of this trade at least by the late nineteenth century. Buka pottery, Bougainville mineral paints, and other items moved north in exchange.

Links did occur, of course, with the societies of the Solomons farther south, particularly local trade with the Shortlands and Choiseul. Pottery styles of the last sixteen hundred years in southern and central Bougainville are clearly related to these areas. These pottery industries, however, must have developed from a Lapita base in the area, as yet undiscovered, with an ultimate origin in the Lapita expansion from the Bismarcks. In the Lapita period Bismarcks obsidian was traded to the Solomons and even beyond, but there is no evidence of obsidian continuing south of Bougainville in the post-Lapita period.

The traditional societies of Bougainville have features in common with those of the rest of Papua New Guinea, generally being small-scale, often relatively egalitarian, and linked by exchange networks. Indeed, the great stereotype of New Guinea social organization, the big man, is an anthropological abstraction based on Oliver's study of the prewar Siwai of southern Bougainville (1955). In some areas there were hereditary chiefs, perhaps a continuation of Lapita social forms, or in NAN areas a sign of influence from AN neighbors.

PREHISTORY AND IDENTITY

As Leach (1984) pointed out, we prehistorians need to be careful what we write because an important change in our audience is occurring. When we wrote almost exclusively for our academic colleagues, what was written didn't really matter. It had no tangible effect on the lives of the people in the region. Since at least the mid-1970s this is no longer the case, with the emerging Pacific elites gaining access to our studies and reading our conclusions from perspectives and with agendas not as disinterested as ours are always claimed to be.

As Pacific nation states have become independent they have sought to adapt the former colonial education systems to new goals. Potentially important for this is the perceived need for new histories to help cement the identities of these new nations. In going beyond colonial perceptions, the writings of anthropologists and archaeologists are obvious sources for such histories (cf Groube 1985). What we have already written and what we say in future will be read by audiences we have not even acknowledged until recently.

Of the three prehistories suggested here, the regional framework could prove attractive to those promoting the solidarity of all Melanesians or even a wider Pan-Pacific identity. The "Melanesian Spearhead" grouping within the South Pacific Forum might find its rationale strengthened, for instance. A prehistory of Bougainville within the Solomons could certainly be seized upon by those groups favoring secession from Papua New Guinea on the grounds of closer cultural and ethnic links to the islands immediately to the south. Those wishing to uphold Bougainville as a nation on its own would only pick up on parts of this perspective, or perhaps place more stress on later colonial and postcolonial history. Those who support the pre-1990 status quo of Bougainville as an integral part of Papua New Guinea would find comfort in a prehistory stressing the links to the north.

None of these possibilities overly exercised my conscious mind prior to the withdrawal of PNG troops from the North Solomons in March 1990 and the subsequent unilateral declaration of independence by the "Republic of Bougainville" on 17 May of that year, except for a vague commitment to a Pan-Pacific perspective on prehistory as being "a good thing" for the region.

In re-examining my past attempts at archaeological synthesis that fea-

ture the North Solomons, I can now “read” more clearly the implications of various of my own statements in relation to these alternative prehistories. Some might tend to offer support for a Pan-Pacific identity (Spriggs 1984; in press *a*, *b*), one attempts to construct a unity for Island Melanesia defined as excluding the island of New Guinea and probably Fiji (1992), one stresses links to the Bismarcks (in press *c*), another those with the Solomons (in press *d*), and a final paper (1991) discusses Nissan as an “island in the middle,” a contested border between two distinct cultural areas.

As recounted in the opening sections of this paper, part of the justification used by the secessionists for their actions is an argument of shared history and shared ethnicity with other islands of the Solomons. The long time-span of human occupation of the North Solomons as revealed by archaeological research has already been appealed to by rebel leaders. While you don’t have to be a physical anthropologist to notice the difference in skin color between Bougainvilleans and everybody else in Papua New Guinea, Friedlaender’s (1987) conclusions cited earlier can be read as supporting Bougainvillean claims to be a separate “race.” Certainly the previously accepted idea of Howells (1973, 48), that all Melanesians form a single basic population, is negated by this and other recent genetic research on the populations of the region.

General knowledge exists on Bougainville of the kinds of traditional connections that the island had with the rest of the Solomons chain, and this was used as part of the case put to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva in August 1991 that so infuriated PNG Minister Bernard Narokobi. In discussing the establishment of the colonial boundary between Bougainville and the Solomons, Interim Government Chairman Joseph Kabui stated: “For thousands of years they had been marrying and trading with other Solomon Islands and they were now being told they were no longer Solomonese” (1991*b*, 2). A further appeal to a shared past with the Solomons was that “for tens of thousands of years we had shared a common currency, culture and trade with the Solomons. This is best demonstrated by the traditional shell currency of the Solomons which is used from the very southern tip of the Solomons to the northernmost tip of Bougainville. This shell money differs in all respects from the shell currency of Papua New Guinea” (Kabui 1991*b*, 3).

In responding that there is no such tribe as Bougainville, Narokobi is in one sense correct. Even if it were true that a single “currency” was in use

throughout the Solomons chain, in precolonial times no individual would have known that to be the case. Until the studies of Ross and other linguists no one on Bougainville knew they were speaking Northwest Solomonian languages linked to those of New Georgia and Santa Isabel. The inhabitants of Bougainville would never have traditionally recognized themselves as Solomon Islanders or even Bougainvilleans. People's horizons would have rarely extended beyond the immediate district in which they lived.

But as Leach pointed out, "historical fictions can be true" (1984, 99). He cited the case of Polynesia, a wholly European concept but one whose "grand scale historical unity," as he calls it, has been shown by the research of linguistics and archaeology to be not just an academic fiction. Leach noted that it gave "the basis for a possible history [to] which contemporary Polynesian leaders might, and to some extent do, attach themselves in claiming a political identity as Polynesians."

The importance of history and archaeology in the making of any national culture has recently been stressed by Foster (1991), although he quotes Renan in warning too that, "To forget and—I will venture to say—to get one's history wrong, are essential factors in the making of a nation" (quoted in Foster 1991, 241). The current debate over the "invention of tradition" in the Pacific and elsewhere (Hanson 1989, 1991; Keesing 1989; Linnekin and Poyer 1990; Trask 1991) is a rerun of possible responses to Renan's nineteenth-century assertions in another age of nascent nationalism.

Such newly discovered geographical and cultural links form the basis for identity as nation states in many parts of the Pacific. In Vanuatu, the recognition of widespread links in languages and cultural practice, brought together under the banner of *kastom*, has been a powerful mobilizing force for unity in the struggle for independence and since. The New Caledonian independence struggle has galvanized around a similar set of symbols to create a unified Kanak identity.

Whether Bougainvilleans in future will internalize a PNG nationalist reading of their prehistory or a Bougainvillean "micronationalist" one in their creation of self is not at all clear. Both can clearly be written; either can be justified by calling on archaeological and linguistic evidence. Renan would have argued that both, of necessity, are "wrong." But perhaps, as Leach intimated, in fact neither is true or false.

POSTSCRIPT

The collections of Bougainville's museum, the North Solomons Cultural Centre, were looted or destroyed in the period after the withdrawal of PNG government authorities in 1990. It is instructive to think about what kinds of emphases might be found in future museum displays there, depending on the outcome of the current crisis. If the secession bid fails and the North Solomons is reintegrated into Papua New Guinea, an emphasis might be placed on the commonalities of heritage shared by Bougainvilleans and other Papua New Guineans: artifacts such as Lapita pottery imported from or stylistically similar to that from the Bismarcks; waisted axes of similar form to those known from the Huon terraces of Morobe; amorphous flaked tools from Kilu comparable to those from other PNG Pleistocene assemblages; stone pestles and mortars and their mysterious counterparts in the New Guinea highlands; obsidian tools from sources in Manus and New Britain; maps of trade contacts between the Bismarcks and Buka via Nissan; language maps showing the distribution of NAN languages or of Meso-Melanesian Cluster AN languages (cf map 6). The icons are all available. The crisis itself would be most unlikely to feature.

A consummation of secession in the setting up of an independent nation of North Solomons would require different icons: sherds and charts illustrating the "Bougainville Strait Interaction System" of Bougainville, Choiseul, and the Shortlands; Malaita shell money and Choiseul clam-shell armrings as components of traditional bride-price; material culture items showing Nissan's strong connections with Buka in the last millennium; sherds from Buka and Nissan illustrative of the stylistic links to Lapita pottery from the southeast Solomons; painted reconstructions and mounted skeletons of fauna unique to Bougainville and other islands of the Solomons; a wall map of the distribution of Northwest Solomonian languages (cf map 7); and a celebration of black skin color in pictures and genetic distance diagrams. The crisis would figure prominently, with examples of reconditioned World War II or homemade guns used by the Bougainville Republican Army, maps showing significant military engagements, spent PNG Defence Force mortar shells and captured weapons, photographs of the flag-raising of 1975 and 1990 in Arawa, and pictures of martyrs (with streets outside named after them, of course).

Dry bones can harm no one.

ALL MAPS have been prepared by Manoa Mapworks of Honolulu. Maps 3 and 4 are based on original compilations by Ian Faulkner; map 5 is based on an original compilation by Win Mumford; and maps 6 and 7 are based on original compilations by Malcom Ross. The text was prepared by Jennifer Elliott.

As is clear from the title, aspects of this paper developed from reading Bruce Trigger's article on "Alternative Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist" (Trigger 1984). I must also acknowledge Sir Edmund Leach's plenary address to the Pacific Science Congress in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1983 as having an important influence. Awareness of the so-called "Invention of Tradition" debate is also acknowledged. While I have not referred to that literature in detail, it provides a parallel text. Eliot's *The Wasteland* provided the last line and the general tone of the piece.

Note

1 "Republican" is used on all the signboards outside the BRA command posts, bases, and in recent press releases. Although "Revolutionary" is used by the PNG media, it is not the term currently used by the BRA itself. [According to Mike Forster, the name was changed after the unilateral declaration of independence of 17 May 1990.—Ed.]

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