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Torben Monberg:

The Reactions of People of Bellona Island towards a Mining Project

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THE REACTIONS OF PEOPLE OF BELLONA ISLAND TOWARDS A MINING PROJECT

Copenhagen 1976

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We express our gratitude to professor Sofus Christiansen for his generous permission to use three of the maps from Bellona, which he prepared for his doctoral dissertation, "Subsistence on Bellona Islands (Mungiki)", Copenhagen 1975. Mr. Jörgen Ulrich has arranged the maps for this IWGIA Document.

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Copenhagen, November 1976

For the International Secretariat of IWGIA

Inese Andersen Helge Kleivan

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Preface

The present booklet was originally published by the National Museum of Denmark as No. 1 in a series of Working Papers.

Its original title was "Mobile in the Trade Wind. The reactions of people of Bellona Island towards a Mining project." This title was to some extent a play on words. Its idea was to emphasise that although the social structure (the mobile) would change its relative position in times of change, in casu the blowing of the Trade Wind in the Southern Pacific, the structure itself (the parts of the mobile) would in essence be the same.

I am grateful to IWGIA for suggesting a reprint of the little publication, primarily because scholarly Working Papers published by a National Institution only rarely find their way to those who are directly involved with the problems with which this paper deals. Through IWGIA it may hopefully meet an interested and more directly involved public which may see that the problems of this little Polynesian Island in the Pacific have striking similarities to the problems of "modernisation" in quite different parts of the world, be they the Arctic or South America.

Since the first edition of the book was printed there is only little new to add. Negotiations between the Government of the Solomon Islands, the people of Bellona, and the mining Company involved have been postponed indefinitely, and the situation on the island is thus today very much the same as it was when the book was first published. No problems have been solved, the people of Bellona are as uncertain about the future as ever, and no ways of solving the local problem of food shortage and acquisition of cash in other ways than through mining have been found.

The National Museum of Denmark
Department of Ethnography

Torben Monberg
September 1976

Introductory remarks

The present paper is concerned with the reactions of the people of Bellona Island, a small Polynesian outlier island in the Solomon Islands, when confronted with a recent plan of having the fairly large deposits of phosphate on their island mined by a foreign company.

Although sketchy in the sense that it does not deal with the problems on a more general and political level, the paper presents the thought processes which the people on the island have verbalised, concerning their present plans and strategies in relation to the mining scheme.

In addition, the paper attempts to present a preliminary anthropological analysis of the Bellonese reactions towards the mining plans, and, at the end, offers some personal comments by the author concerning their implications for the future of the island. Hopefully this presentation and analysis of the problems involved in social change, may also throw some light on similar problems in other parts of the world.

Background

Bellona Island is a Polynesian Outlier Island in the Solomon Islands. Together with the neighbouring island, Rennell, it forms a cultural unit, different from the remaining islands in the otherwise predominantly Melanesian Solomon Islands group (Elbert and Monberg, 1965: 1-67, Monberg, 1966: 1-20, Kuschel, 1975: 2-30).

Bellona is a raised coral atoll of an oblongish form, covering 17.4 square kilometers. It has a coral rim encircling the entire island covered with primary forest. The low interior which in places lies just above sea level constitutes the fertile and cultivated area. Along a maintrail traversing the island from northwest to southeast lie seven villages and some scattered homesteads, the habitations of the entire population. The cultivable areas surround the villages and stretch from the center to

the rim of the forest. As the coral cliffs of the coast fall vertically into the sea almost everywhere there are no permanent dwellings at the coast, and only few places where canoes can be dragged ashore.

Fishing thus is of less importance as a source of food than on most other Polynesian islands. Gardens are cultivated by the slash-and-burn method, and the main staple crops are several varieties of yam, sweet potatoes, taro and bananas. Considerable areas which were previously used as garden land have during the last decade been converted into coconut plantations, mainly with the purpose of producing copra for sale overseas. (We shall deal with this aspect of Bellonese crop-raising below.)

'Today the total number of Bellonese is approximately 800. (A detailed, mimeographed census has not been made since 1963. The data have, however, been followed up to 1972, but have not at the moment of writing been worked up.) About 2-300 of the population, however, live abroad mostly as labourers or in schools in Honiara, the capital of the Solomons, or elsewhere. Apart from a Melanesian SDA teacher and his family no non-Bellonese live on the island itself.

The population is divided into two clans, sa'a Kaitu'u which inhabits the two eastern districts of the island, and the smaller sa'a Taupongi whose members live in the district at the western tip of Bellona. Each clan traces its ancestors 25 generations back to the first immigrants arriving on the island allegedly from the island of Ubea, probably Wallis Island in the Central Pacific. Down through history the two clans have furcated into exogamous patrilineal descent groups, 21 in the Kaitu'u clan and 3 in the Taupongi clan. Land is individually owned, and a system of primogeniture prevails. Only on rare occasions do women inherit land. Garden plots belonging to members of a patrilineal descent group commonly lay lumped together, but due to constant fights over land a certain dispersion has taken place over the years.

Bellona has no chiefs in the traditional Polynesian sense of the word. However, in each lineage one may find men who enjoy higher prestige than others, often because they are the oldest sons within a generation and thus have inherited larger plots of land but also because they have shown particular abilities as gardeners, fishermen, political leaders or church leaders. In

this respect Bellona society resembles some Melanesian societies more than it does those of Polynesia proper.

The people of both Rennell and Bellona have enjoyed almost complete isolation from the outer world until the beginning of World War II. Apart from sporadic contact with blackbirders at the end of last century, with missionaries, and with British government officials in the first decades of the twentieth century the two islands have been left almost entirely to themselves. Even contact with Melanesians of neighbouring islands has only been sporadic. The isolation was, however, broken when a group of people from Rennell were taken to mission stations in the heart of the Solomons during the 1930ties to be converted to Christianity. They brought the new religion to Rennell which was Christianized virtually overnight, and subsequently to Bellona in 1938 (Monberg, 1962 and 1967) After the Second World War visits by foreign vessels became more frequent and social changes began to take place with increasing speed: The acceptance of Christianity in two different versions, Seventh Day Adventism (SDA) and that of the South Seas Evangelical Mission (SSEM), made people move together in villages centering around either SDA or SSEM churches. (Previously people had lived in single homesteads scattered along the main trail of the island with each homestead inhabited by an extended nuclear family.) The new religion brought an end to the incessant interlineage fights on the island, and also to the innumerable religious rites which penetrated almost all daily activities (Monberg, 1965). Basically, however, the social and economic structure remained the same: Garden produce was still distributed according to the traditional system, cooperation in work was still based on kin affiliation, and few changes occurred in regard to ownership rights to land. Over the years some Western goods and a limited amount of cash have sifted into the island, mainly through some copra production and with Bellonese who returned from work overseas. Until recently, however, cash economy and subsistence economy have been kept as two distinct economic spheres: Land and locally produced food was never converted into cash on the island. It might sometimes happen that cash was used as presents or as reciprocation in the same way as were non-consumptional goods in the pre-contact economy. As mentioned, closer contact with the Central authorities

in the Solomons brought an increasing interest in the production of copra on Bellona. Considerable garden areas (in 1966: 30%) were converted into coconut groves, and during the 1960ties some copra was actually produced. With the slump in market prices beginning at the end of the decade this production was, however, given up almost entirely and coconuts are now predominantly used for drinking, as fresh water is scarce on the island.

Bellona and phosphate

The following pages are less concerned with presenting an 'objective' description of actual historical events connected with the mining proposal in 1975, but rather with showing a picture of how such events are seen through the eyes of the people of Bellona themselves. In other words it gives the reader a picture of how a certain set of evaluations are formed within a certain society and how they are linked with deliberations concerning future economic transactions with an extra-territorial party.

Following preliminary research on Rennell by Stanley in 1927 it was known that the soil of Rennell contained a certain amount of phosphate. In the mid-sixties large amounts of bauxite were found on Rennell (Christiansen and Monberg, 1970). Trial mining is presently being carried out by the Mitsui Mining and Smelting Co. with the consent of the people of Rennell. Final negotiations concerning the actual mining and processing procedures are to take place some time in 1976.

The (then) Chief Geologist of the British Solomon Islands, John Grover, continued Stanley's research and discovered that phosphate existed, not only on Rennell but also on the neighbouring, Bellona. In the years following 1958 these phosphate deposits were analysed. John Grover's preliminary survey and analysis in 1958 (Grover 1958) was followed up by more extensive surveys by the Bureau of Mineral Resources and the British Phosphate Commission. Calculations showed that there were about 8 major deposits on the island, covering an area of about 400 acres (11% of the total land area of Bellona, but mostly concentrated in and around the best arable parts of the island (see map). The wet tonnage of phosphate is today estimated to be about 7,000,000, perhaps as much as 9,000,000

tons. To mine the phosphate about 200,000 tons of topsoil and another 1,000,000 tons of other matter (trees, coral limestone, etc.) will have to be removed from the areas in a process of strip mining. By a recent estimate the Bellona phosphate can be removed and shipped from the island in seven to nine years.

During the first part of 1975, a newly formed business company, the ABCD[1)], approached the people of Bellona and the Government of the Solomon Islands with a proposal for mining the phosphate of Bellona. The general outline of their proposal was the following:

Much of the central island floor would be removed and restored concurrently with mining.

It would be necessary to relocate the locals into equal or better habitats at places of their choice. Should any locals wish to remain on the island, either as labour force or in order to continue their own endeavours, this should be done in such a way as not to interfere with their living standard.

Compensation should be paid to each village and each owner to the value of their real property.

Churches, houses, and community buildings disturbed by the mining procedures would be purchased and replaced with equal or better buildings.

Excavation would be planned so that the entire island would not be disrupted at the same time.

A jetty and causeway would be built at the west end of the island together with ship moorings to accommodate loading facilities.

A reclamation programme would go along with the mining plan: The expected two feet of rich topsoil would be carefully removed, and, upon the completion of the removal of phosphatic deposits, replaced and contoured into the mined out areas. Villages and dwellings would be relocated where requested by the Bellonese. Upon completion of the mining 'improvements' such as roadways, water wells, pipelines, some permanent installations, including extensive marine loading facilities, would be left behind on the island.

The people of Bellona would receive a royalty interest on the net value of the phosphate marketed.

Although expatriate labour would have to carry out some of the more specialised work local people would have the first chance to

work for the company in any position for which local people were qualified.

The Company would assist in starting local stores, and the Company would not have its own stores unless local people wanted this.

Any expatriates would be required to follow local customs in all respects. If local rules were not followed such expatriate would have to leave the island at the request of the local council.

The Company would, at its own expense, help local people go to school off the island.

The Company would work with local council and local chiefs and paramount chiefs in planning economic development while company is engaged in mining operations.

Disagreements would be negotiated with local council and chiefs. If no agreement was reached, the government of the Solomon Islands would be consulted to decide an answer.

A limited number of copies of the ABCD's written proposal has been distributed among members of the Solomon Islands government and to certain key persons on Bellona.

Prior to the actual formulation of the proposal some Bellonese living in Honiara were approached by representatives of the ABCD company in order that contact be established between the people of Bellona themselves and the Company. Obviously the purpose has been to elicit the opinions of the local inhabitants concerning a possible project of mining the phosphate of their island.

The Company's strategy during these first phases has given rise to some criticism on the island. It has been claimed, rightly or wrongly, that one of its representatives visited Bellona accompanied by a Bellonese from Honiara under the pretenses of wishing to acquire land for setting up a store on the island; but that this representative, immediately upon his arrival, declared that he had actually come to talk with the chief or chiefs of the island about a possible project of mining the phosphate.

The outcome of this first brief visit by an ABCD representative was that a few Bellonese flew with him to Honiara for further talks. Their journey to, and stay in, Honiara was financed by the Company. During these talks the Bellonese were briefed on the Company's plans, apparently roughly along the lines referred to above.

Having heard of these plans the Bellonese who went to Honiara claim that they pointed out that it was not for them to make any decision on behalf of the people of Bellona, but that they would have to return to the island to hold meetings in order to hear people's reactions. On Bellona this new possibility for changes of the island's future were discussed at a number of meetings the biggest of which was held in the middle village, Ngongona. After heated debates between the people who favoured mining and those who opposed it, those who were in favour of further negotiations with the Company and the Government on the matter were asked to sign a petition indicating their positive attitude. The petition contained an alleged 561 names. (Opponents, however, claim that it was signed by family heads, not only on behalf of their wives but also for their children, including infants.) The petition was taken to Honiara by members of the party who favoured mining. Meetings were held with the Company and with representatives of the Government, including the Prime Minister. Even representatives of the minority group who opposed mining, who had also submitted a petition protesting against the Company, were heard by the Government. In August 1975 the Director of the Geological Surveys in the Solomons held a meeting on Bellona in which he explained that the amount of phosphate on the island was small and could be mined within ten years, and, also, that mining could probably not take place before Rennell mining had been completed in about fifty years time. As will be shown below, the people of Bellona reacted unfavourably to this news.

Several meetings and negotiations have taken place between the various parties involved during the latter part of 1975. The ABCD *Company* has submitted a formal proposal to the Government of the Solomon Islands constituting a preamble to an application for a prospecting licence. After a number of meetings, the Government has asked the persons involved, including the expatriates constituting the Board of the Company, to return to their respective homes while deliberations concerning the grant or refusal of the application of mining the phosphate of Bellona by the ABCD company take place. By mid-December 1975 no final decision had been made.

The actual sequence of events leading up to this phase has obviously been one involving a considerable amount of meetings not only between company representatives and officials in Honiara,

but also between people on Bellona itself and among the Bellonese living in the capital.

There are thus several groups of actors in this play in which the future of the small oceanic island is at stake: The expatriate members of the Company who wish to obtain a mining license on Bellona; the Solomon Islands Government; the Bellonese living in Honiara and on the island.

The Company

The key persons from the ABCD Company who have been directly involved in negotiations with the Government and with people of Bellona are chiefly businessmen; one is a geologist; a local from the Chinese community in Honiara acts as the Company's secretary. Their policy has apparently been to deal as much and as directly as possible with people of Bellona, especially with representatives of the group that favours a future mining of the island. Nothing is known of the actual financial background of the ABCD Company. Some Bellonese claim to know that there are American interests of a larger scale behind their activities and perhaps also some Japanese interests. This can at this stage neither be verified nor discounted.

The Government

According to Solomon Island laws and following the mining ordinance of the country, negotiations concerning prohibitions, restrictions, or grants of mining licenses may be carried out by the Government alone.

Although the Government may actually listen to the opinions of other parties involved in a mining project, all minerals have in the Solomon Islands' Mining Ordinance been declared the property of the Government, and theirs is therefore the sole right to make any final decision in connection with mining. In the case of Bellona, the Government is, at least in theory, also bound by a law passed in 1971 declaring the island a closed area (where no mining rights will be granted) for a period of 50 years.

At the moment of writing the Government has not expressed any official opinion of their stand in relation to the question of mining or of their willingness to grant a mining license to the ABCD company.

The people of Bellona

It has been mentioned previously that although a considerable number of Bellonese (between 200 and 300) live outside the island the majority of the population still remain on Bellona. There is a constant traffic of people between Bellona and Honiara: Some Bellonese living in Honiara claim that they have settled there permanently in the hope of making 'a better living for themselves and their children', but the majority live there for periods ranging from a few weeks to a couple of years, sometimes as labourers, schoolchildren, or employees. Some young men who have received a higher education are presently employed by Government agencies, private companies, or by the missions. A few male Bellonese adults in Honiara make a living for themselves and their families by producing carvings of traditional Bellonese style or as imitations of foreign styles.

On Bellona only a very limited number of persons, such as a few teachers and a number of church officials and a nurse have a proper cash income. The great majority still live under the system of subsistence economy with a minimal additional cash income, acquired either by producing carvings, from selling copra overseas, from very small Hawker stores, or from other secondary activities. Most time is spent by the majority of the population on food producing activities, such as fishing and gardening, on housebuilding - and on various other kinds of work (including endless meetings mostly benefiting the island's missions).

Administratively the island is represented by one member in the Central Islands Council (the other islands represented are Guadalcanal, Savo, Nggela, and Rennell). This council deals with the islands' relations to the Solomons in general, collects taxes (each adult male pays eight dollars in tax per year), and allots funds to the development of the respective member islands.

On the island a local court deals with minor offenses, and in reality especially with fights over ownership rights to customary land.

In accordance with the general policy of the Solomon Islands of localising administration to a great extent (thus attempting to meet with the very different demands for cultural identity and development in a heteregeneous society) each island or cultural area has been required to set up a body of local chiefs whose primary function is to formulate local laws connected with such institutions as marriage rules, customary economy, and customary land tenure. On Bellona each of its 21 patrilineal descent groups is represented by one or more of its male elders in the group of chiefs, 28 in all. This body has from its midst selected one person who is to be Paramount Chief for a period of two years, and also a secretary who is to assist the Paramount Chief in his work.

This system has given rise to much bewilderment on Bellona. The Bellonese claim, and rightly so, that it is not customary for the island to have chiefs. Each patrilineal descent group was to a considerable extent autonomous, and power and authority rested with one or more prestigious lineage elders within each group; an elder of one lineage had no power to issue orders to people of another. Never did these lineage elders however meet to decide the laws of the island or to discuss political matters in a formal way. However, the Bellonese have now followed the decree of the Central Islands council and set up a body of chiefs. Their actual authority is, however, by the Bellonese felt to be uncertain. So far, they have held a number of meetings to formulate general laws concerning the land tenure system of the island, but it is not up to the chiefs to ensure that such laws are enforced outside their own descent groups.

Today there are two major determinants of a person's authority and prestige on Bellona: a) Wealth in land, and b) positions in the island's missions or formal education in the European sense of the word. Within each descent group some few individuals own more land than others. Both power and obligations are linked with such wealth. The wealthy landowner must see to it that people who are poor in land can borrow areas for cultivation, and if he makes big gardens himself, that the produce is distributed among fellow islanders. This system of power and obligations is deeply rooted

especially among the older landowners on Bellona; a feeling of shame befalls the wealthy person who is not able to feed fellow islanders who are in need.

This system of authority and obligations works within the stratum of subsistence economy on the island, and cash economy only rarely affects this economic sphere: Land and crops in their raw state are never, or at least only in extremely few cases, converted into cash.

As for formal education as a determinant of authority, this works to a lesser extent not because those few persons on the island who have had such education also have a cash income, but rather because educated persons are those who, in the eyes of the Bellonese are best suited to deal with strangers from the world outside Bellona, both in regards to foreign policy in general, to religion, and in regards to economic matters. Like cash, their authority thus belongs to a sphere different from that concerned with the basic system of production of the island. Roughly speaking the wealthy lineage elders have the authority in regards to land, and the new power elite on the island have authority in questions primarily concerned with schools, mission activities, and with cash economy.

Land, money, and the consequences of great decisions

Although two spheres: cash economy and subsistence economy are on the grand level conceived of as being of two different orders on Bellona, there is on a smaller scale no unsurmountable gap between them: Locally produced items such as copra, poultry, and objets d'art are occasionally sold to non-islanders either in Honiara or to visiting fishing vessels. Among the islanders themselves, cooked food may be sold, primarily at a small market which is set up close to the air strip when the islanders gather to meet the incoming weekly plane from Honiara.

Conceptually and on the low level there is thus a certain link between objects and cash, and the day is probably not far away when even garden produce in its fresh state may be an object of trade among the islanders themselves. Today, however, the traditional attitude towards such produce still is that it must be more or less formally distributed - one might say exchanged - between people without involving cash in the transaction.

The attitude towards land is, however, different.

According to the laws of the Solomon Islands the land of Bellona cannot be sold or even given away to non-islanders and transactions involving land among the islanders themselves are subject to the traditional regulations imposed on all customary land.

So far land and money have not been interchangeable items on Bellona. As one Bellonese expressed it:

> "Land in Western society is just a commodity to sell in the market. It is not the same in our island here. We have a lot of feelings for our land. For people to want to live on their own land does not mean that his land is better than somebody else's; but his ancestors, his grandfathers and his everything is in that land. Therefore he is attached to it in his feelings in his existence, to his land; and as I have said: This is the whole basis for our existence .... there is a difference between cash and land. Cash is exhaustible - I can be very generous with my land because the land is always going to be there. He (somebody else) can make his garden there, and after him some other people, or I can work it myself. But there is a limit to your generosity with cash..."

There is no doubt that the emotional attachment to arable land and its commodity value are two factors so closely intertwined that they are almost indistinguishable analytically.

It has been mentioned earlier that the Bellonese planted a considerable amount of coconut trees in their garden areas during the late fifties and the first part of the sixties. The purpose was to obtain enough nuts, both for copra production and for seed nuts which were sold to overseas customers who considered the nuts of Bellona and Rennell to be of a particularly good quality (in fact Rennell and Bellona nuts are considerably larger than those found in most other coconut producing countries in the world (Christiansen, in press)). This brought some cash to the island; but obviously the Bellonese did not compare land value with cash because of this production. Land was not believed destroyed from the creation of coconut plantations.

The prospect of mining operations which might destroy or alter the bearing capacity of arable land considerably led to the

unavoidable question: Is there in fact any relationship between the land value and cash value?

In the beginning of the 1960ties when the British Phosphate Commission began its survey on Bellona with the expressed purpose of assessing the value of minerals contained beneath the topsoil of the island, the Bellonese began discussions among themselves as to whether they favoured mining or not. A great majority of the people from all social groups on the island ranging from those who themselves had little land to the wealthy landowners of the island unconditionally refused to agree to have their island mined. The expressed reason for the refusal was in retrospect that at that time there was plenty of food on the island, that the gardens still yielded generous crops, and that school fees, taxes, and other tax burdens, were not levied so heavily on people. The little cash needed could easily be obtained by producing copra.

Obviously, however, cash and land became at that time comparable units. One Bellonese expressed this in the following way in 1975:

> "The Government (representatives) talked about it (the possibility of mining), and there were some people who agreed, some did not. X (a Bellonese living in Honiara) arrived and asked us to sign a petition (of refusal), for the land to remain. I signed it myself because in those days everything was good; our food supplies were ample for everybody; and the days of money had not come from the Government. There was no payment for schools because the schools here were small. Those days were good days...."

The prospects of mining, cash, and land in 1975

With the arrival of the new proposal for mining in 1975 the evaluation of land versus cash took place in a new light as living conditions on Bellona had been altered considerably since the beginning of the 1960ties. Several factors had changed the situation over the last decade: Land had lost much of its value; production of copra and seednuts had come to a standstill due to the slump in copra prices on the world market and due to a saturation of the market for seed nuts; the demand for cash had risen.

It was in the light of these conditions that a new attitude towards the mining of phosphate emerged on Bellona. As mentioned the overwhelming majority of Bellonese were in 1975 in favour of beginning serious negotiations with Government authorities and with the ABCD Company about selling out of land for mining. This did not mean that they were at that time actually willing to give their consent to mining under any conditions, but that they agreed to enter into a phase of bargaining with non-Bellonese about the price of the most important asset of the island.

As was the case in the beginning of the 1960ties the Bellonese were in 1975 divided into two groups with different opinions: One who favoured negotiations, and one who was strongly against it. The difference in the attitude in these years was, however, that in 1975 the idea of alienating themselves from their land was not foreign to the overwhelming majority of the Bellonese, whereas only a small group of people objected strongly to this striking enterprise. Below we shall present the views of the situation as it was perceived by the "Pro"s and by the "Con"s respectively in 1975.

Mining as a benefit. The views of the majority.

From talks with Bellonese who favour negotiations concerning a possible mining of the island one gets a fairly uniform set of arguments for their points of view:

When the Danish geographer Sofus Christiansen made a thorough investigation in the mid-sixties of the techniques of gardening, the soil condition, and of the general ecological situation on Bellona, his analyses showed that conditions for gardening on the island were likely to deteriorate rapidly and that, before 15 years had gone, the soil would have become so poor that an abrupt decline in yields could be expected. He told his Bellonese friends what he had discovered, but his prognostication was met with incredulity by most people on the island. When recalling today what he said ten years ago they have now come to realise that he was right: "Fifteen years have gone... our yams are rotten, our panna are rotten, and we do not know the reason for this." Another Bellonese said that he did not believe in Sofus

Christiansen's predictions until two years ago when he saw a declination in crops. Today the soil is poor, and, in spite of hard work, yields become smaller and smaller. There is hardly any food (now). People can eat coconuts, there are plenty of them, but they do not like them except for drinking. During a visit to the capital of the Solomons he saw the large piles of food in the market and he was overwhelmed with grief because of the present state of his homeland, Bellona.

On the island, people have discussed the reason for the present scarcity, but have found no explanation. They have prayed for food in the churches, but in vain.

It will be obvious to anyone who has lived off and on Bellona over the last 16 years that people are speaking the truth when they claim that there has been a gradual decline in crop yields over that period. Gardening on Bellona is to a high degree seasonal with the main harvest period falling around the months of May and June. From time immemorial the population has become used to periods of scarcity, especially during the period of planting around October-December. Today it is, however, difficult for people to get enough food for everybody even during the harvest season, and the time of lavish feasts of distribution of yam and panna are now about to come to an end. Such feasts of distribution which were important parts of pre-Christian culture and which lasted for several decades into the period when Christianity had been adopted after the Second World War, worked to maintain a systematic balance in pluralistic integration between mediation and diversification of specific social groups. Today this is gradually beginning to break down as people are primarily concerned with harvesting enough to provide food only for their own households. It is obvious that this must have a considerable effect on the entire social organisation of the island, and on a higher level of analysis: on the social structure.

It is of interest to note that the Bellonese themselves are unable to provide answers when asked why there is not enough food these days on the island. As mentioned they cannot conceive of any reason why the situation has changed so radically. When pressed for an answer they always refer to external authorities, who 'know more about these matters' than they do themselves.

An analysis seems to reveal a number of reasons which have led

up to the present situation of scarcity: A considerable increase of the population, especially during the last two decades, has given the island more mouths to feed. Although a portion of the population has at the same time moved to other parts of the Solomon Islands, shiploads of food items are sent from Bellona to kinsmen abroad as a supplement to their poor wages, and to meet with their general desire for food from their homeland.

The rising demands for food has made the Bellonese overwork their gardens to a considerable extent, thus disturbing the previous balance of the system of shifting cultivation which made it necessary for garden areas to lay fallow for about five to ten years. The introduction of the non-seasonal sweet potato has tempted people to plant this crop in garden areas immediately after the yam, panna, or bananas have been harvested, or, sometimes even in 'mixed gardens' together with sweet potatoes, bananas, and yam or panna. There is no doubt that the present overcultivation of gardens has had a serious effect on their yields.

The demand for cash which could previously be met with by producing copra has tempted the Bellonese to plant large coconut plantations. As mentioned above, 30% of the garden areas have now been converted into coconut groves. The island has in this way been deprived of about one third of its arable land.

The creation of mission villages, and the construction of an airfield on the small island has also cut down garden areas to a considerable extent. The villages are now spacious, often with large football fields as their centers. The air field covers about 40,000 m^2 of land which was previously some of the best garden area of the island.

As regards manpower and time to work in the gardens, post-mission days have also seen a considerable change: When the Bellonese who previously lived in hamlets scattered along the main trail going through Bellona and thus close to their garden areas, moved together in villages, much time was taken up by walking to and from their gardens, and by carrying crops to the homesteads. There has thus been a tendency to choose to cultivate areas in close proximity to the new villages, leaving the more remote, but fertile, pockets in or near the forest uncultivated.

With the present possibilities of emigrating to Honiara, a number of able men and women have left the island, thus depriving

it of a considerable amount of manpower which was in former days engaged in garden work. This is especially the case with many adult men and male teenagers who have drifted away from the island to the capital to seek adventure and cash. Those young men who are still on the island do, under the new era, see little point in being very active in garden work, especially as such work does not give them any prospects of future prestige which was attached to it in the old days. Teenagers spend much of their time drifting more or less aimlessly around, doing occasional work when urged to it by the elders, but otherwise enjoying themselves with playing football, strumming their home-made ukuleles, and with skin-diving inside the reef to provide themselves with food for the day. It was characteristic that some of the young men who responded to my questions about the future of the island said that they did not think about the future at all, 'only about today, that is all'.

With the expressed feeling of 'being poor because land has lost its value' it is not surprising that the Bellonese seek to find other ways and means to overcome their present feeling of poverty. The fact that external sources offer them the possibility of getting cash for their allegedly valueless land and thus enabling to convert their economic system from subsistence to cash seems outwardly reasonable and full of new prospects. Their food problem is acute, and they feel that it should be solved here and now.

When confronted with the question how they, the Bellonese, could ever dream of giving up their land in exchange for something as vaporous as money they have several answers ready for the naïve foreign interrogator who has again and again confronted them with their own assurances that land was something to be honoured, that it was their pride and the basis of their entire lives.

The most simple and straightforward answer is that they have now entered an era in which cash is believed to be a necessity: they have to pay their taxes, lest they be imprisoned; the present school fees are a heavy burden (members of the SDA mission insist on sending their children to SDA schools on the island and have to pay school fees. The school of the South Seas Evangelical Church is Government subsidised and no fees are paid). They also need money to be able to travel to see their relatives in Honiara, and people in Honiara need money to come back to Bellona on holi-

days. Such are the immediate demands for cash for the people of Bellona.

One of these aspects has more implications than immediately meets the eye and should be dealt with in more detail: the question of school fees.

It has been mentioned above that two assets act as determinants for local prestige and authority: wealth in land and higher education. The present decline in the value of land having made it difficult or impossible even for the wealthy individual to retain or increase his social status on the island by intensive gardening and a subsequent lavish distribution of food, land as such has lost much of its value except as a means of supporting the members of the individual households. That the people of Bellona are inclined to seek other means to gain prestige and status for their kinsmen is therefore understandable. Such means are first and foremost the acquisition of education in the European sense of the word. In the minds of the Bellonese it is obvious that the future lies in life as it is believed lived by Europeans. Although they are not unaware of the shadier side of the White Man's activities they nevertheless still believe that he must evidently have some qualifications which enable him to accumulate wealth, to invent and run useful machines, and to live a life which from the outside appears to be predominantly free from the ardours of hard labour.

In Bellonese minds, sitting in an office, running a business, heading a team of workmen or acting as a politician, is neither labour, nor work in the strict sense of these terms. As one educated Bellonese explained:

> "They (the Bellonese) see these white people who do not seem to do any work in our concept of working. Our concept of working is different from your concept of working. For a Bellonese to watch a lawyer doing his job - to us it is not a job, and yet he would get more money."

On Bellona such positions as those of pastors, teachers, and nurses are means of acquiring high status within the society. These jobs are held by people who have secondary school training and in some cases even a higher education. In pre-contact days high prestige was acquired through hard labour and through a

wealth in gardens. This is not possible any longer. The increase in the population makes land areas allotted to individuals smaller and smaller for each generation, and the increasing infertility of the soil causes a decline in yields. From this follows the evident rationale that if land can become converted into cash, the individual landowner may be able to give his descendants something which is more valuable than land: a better education.

From the way people of Bellona talk about money it is obvious that the prospect of converting land into money is not merely a matter of acquiring means to buy as many Western goods as possible as quickly as possible, but just as much, or perhaps more so, a matter of acquiring means to improve the future of their offspring by enabling them to get a good education overseas, which - again - will affect their prestige on Bellona and abroad.

To the outsider what is seemingly an irrational urge to convert the lasting commodity of land into something as uncertain in value as cash, is to the insider an entirely rational conversion of commodities from one sphere to another, a new one, with the common purpose of maximising the internal profit. Cash becomes, in the eyes of the islanders, not only a means of acquiring food items to supplement their poor crops, but also a means of assuring the future of their children through education, as did the land before it became 'useless'.

Another surprising aspect of this sudden bridging of the gap between what was previously two different economic spheres is the 'Now or Never' attitude of the Bellonese with regard to mining:

Among those who favour that a permission for mining be granted to outsiders it is widely agreed that if mining is to take place it should begin now. No one wants to wait 15 or 50 years. Outsiders have interpreted this attitude as one of pure selfishness on the part of the present landholders of the island. These have been accused of greed for money, and of not caring about the future of their children and families who are to be deprived of land because of the mining.

When seen from the inside this is obviously partly an unjust accusation. It is evident from the above that the Bellonese are genuinely interested in investing their assets in the future. They have realised that the cultivation of their land in its present state is not a sound investment. In their minds it is

is important to invest in the preservation of the existing social values. Although they have never voiced this opinion, it seems reasonable to make such a deduction from their attitude. A period of poverty in either crops or money would endanger the maintanance of the present system of integration on the island. Although there was previously an almost unsurpassable cognitive cleft between the two different economic spheres it has nevertheless been bridged. One Bellonese who favoured mining on the island said:

> "If Bellona is going to be mined, the children can go to the big schools (for higher education abroad) where (education) costs money and get their schooling *which they can live from* (my italics). But in these days children and adults are in the same situation (on Bellona), and the children become bad from disease and die, because there is nothing to eat..."

The attitude sketched above is closely linked to the Bellonese feeling that mining should start immediately, and at least not wait until the bauxite deposits on Rennell have been exhausted in about 50 years' time. From expatriate authorities they have received the impression that the Government of the Solomons will not be willing to promote the mining of Bellona at the present time, but that it prefers to see the phosphate of the island mined at a later stage, perhaps when the Rennell mining is well under way and a processing plant has been set up on the island to handle the phosphate in conjunction with the processing of the Rennell bauxite.

Although unrealistic as seen from the point of view of the outsider, the Bellonese nevertheless consider mining now an important must. From the point of view of the Bellonese it seems easy to see why: mining is believed to be the only way in which the islanders can establish continuity in the fulfillment of some of their most urgent needs: food, and a just social and economic balance on the island. If mining procedures do not begin here and now, the present generation of adults feel that they will not be able to control the configurations within the social organisation of the island in the immediate future. The present scarcity of produce is seen as a danger which may have disruptive effects on

the social order. An influx of money from mining now may keep the existing order under some control.

This all links up also with the general feeling on Bellona that no matter whether the present generation of adult Bellonese agree to the plan of mining or whether they oppose it, mining will take place some time, some day in the future. Mining of their island thus being inevitable they prefer to see it done while they themselves still maintain some control over the turn of events rather than having a possible new generation, perhaps even of 'White Men, Melanesians or of Half Castes' as one Bellonese expressed it, control the future of their island.

Two other factors seem to act as incentives towards mining. The most important is the fact that the ABCD Company, in its mining proposal and also verbally, has promised the people of Bellona that a plan of restoring the areas mined will be carried out in conjunction with the mining procedures. When an area is to be mined, the fertile topsoil will be stripped off and shoved aside. After the phosphatic soil at the lower stratum has been removed the pits will either be leveled out, the topsoil put back and fertilised (!) or the pits will be filled with foreign matter such as old tree trunks, lime stone, or perhaps with soil from other parts of the Solomons, and the topsoil put back, all in order to make the mined areas arable again. Undoubtedly this prospect may to some extent help the Bellonese overcome any worries about the social and ecologic future of their island. It is, however, worth noting that it seems to have had very little effect on people's attitude towards the mining. Most Bellonese are still in doubt about whether they will actually ever get their arable land back, but those who favour the prospects of mining have stated that if the island ends up as a number of 'holes in the middle of the ocean' they will temporarily move to Honiara or to some other place in the Solomons, or they will set up their houses at the rim of the island or at the coast 'and live from their money'.

Some Bellonese favouring mining and wishing it to take place have mentioned other reasons for their choice. Inevitably the digging of pits on the island will lead to the disturbance of a number of ancestral graves. In the mining proposal measures have been taken for a compensation to descendants of those ancestors whose graves will have to be removed. The presence of ancestral

graves is, in the minds of the Bellonese, also a symbolic expression of the continuity of their culture in relation to land. In the pre-Christian religion ancestors acted as messengers to the deities bringing fertility and good crop back to Bellona from heavenly abodes (Monberg 1965: 96-105). Although this belief has officially been abandoned, ancestors and land are still linked together emotionally. Present lineage elders seem to have come to terms with the fact that mining inevitably means that some graves have to be moved, but it is hard for them to concieve of the idea that their own bones may at some future stage have to be removed from the land from which they have earned their lives and to which they are still attached. Thus they would rather see their garden dug up, partly or totally, while they are alive in order that they may themselves be buried where no disturbance may take place in the future.

When confronted with the question of how the Bellonese imagine they are going to live under the mining operations, they almost uniformly express confidence in the promises given by the ABCD Company, i.e. that new houses will be built for people at places of their choice, that they will have water supplies and electricity installed for them on the island, that new roads will be built, and perhaps even a new airstrip. Should all this fail, the Bellonese questioned have expressed confidence that they can move to other parts of the Solomons and live there temporarily or perhaps even permanently, setting up businesses and 'eat from money'. Not one of those Bellonese who would like mining to go ahead has, however, expressed doubts that a mining company will fulfill the promises of creating a new and happy life for the people on the island itself.

All this obviously leads up to a discussion of the Bellonese relation to money in general. Briefly one may say that when money first entered the economic system of the island, it was given the same position as certain objects, earrings and necklaces which were formerly given away or exchanged under ceremonial circumstances. A detailed discussion of this example of transformation falls outside the scope of the present paper. One illustration may, however, lend perspective to the discussion below of how the Bellonese visualise their 'new life', that is, the life they expect to come to live when subsistence economy is changed into cash economy during the period of mining:

In the early sixties copra production on Bellona reached its peak when a cooperative society was established on the island. (Monberg, 1970.) Copra was sold by individual producers to a society handling the resale to the Copra Board in Honiara. The individual producer received cash for copra. With his cash in hand he could buy supplies in a local cooperative store on the island. As copra production was, however, a joint enterprise involving not only the owner's immediate kinsfolk, often wife and children, but also other members of his family, the money received for the copra was immediately distributed among the producers, and also among certain kinsmen towards whom a Bellonese always feels economic obligations, especially brothers-in-law or fathers-in-law. An extensive, but as yet unpublished, study of the Bellona cooperative and its failure has shown that in the majority of cases the owner of the coconut plantation from which the copra came was left with as little as a few shillings out of every ten pounds received in payment for 'his' copra. Individual accumulation of wealth, be it of traditional objects or of cash, is a concept alien to the Bellonese. To be of any value commodities have to circulate among the inhabitants of the island.

With this concept in mind it is of interest to throw a further glance at the islanders' vision of a future in which cash is the principal commodity. What are they going to do with their money when their land has been sold to the miners?

With the 'sale' of mining grants money is expected to enter the island in three ways: 1) as a per capita compensation to be paid to every single individual on the island, 2) as disturbance allowances to be paid for all property, including land, houses, graves, trees, and crops affected by the mining process and the necessary construction of roads, 3) as royalties to be paid to land owners, based on the number of tons of phosphate removed from their property.

It is characteristic of the present Bellonese attitude that very little is said about how money will be used in the future. No exact plans have been made, and on the whole statements concerning the future use of money are very vague indeed. This may be taken as a realistic approach as no one knows so far how much money is actually involved in a possible transaction, negotiations concern-

ing compensations having not yet begun. When pressed to make guesses concerning the future of a cash-oriented Bellona, the islanders, however, reiterate the statement that large amounts will be spent on the education of children and on the payment of taxes. People who have been in closer contact with Europeans in Honiara visualise a future in which the Bellonese, jointly or as single individuals, invest their money in companies overseas or even start small businesses themselves in Honiara or elsewhere, thus receiving a profit comparable to the previous yields from their land.

A common statement concerns the fact that the Bellonese have no traditions for handling money, and that there is an immediate danger that they 'will go as fast as they have come'. This seems a true one, especially if one compares money with the traditional objects of the island which, as said above, obviously must circulate all the time, creating alliances and forming oppositional groups along their way.

With the previous experience in mind of how the money earned from copra production was immediately distributed among fellow islanders, it seems tempting to foresee a future in which money will be distributed in the same way as people distributed their garden crops before, rather than believing that the European concept of accumulating money be the solution. Those Bellonese who had thought about this at all, said that it would of course be entirely 'up to the individual to use his money in the way he wanted'. Obviously this answer is an extremely vague one, but understandable in the light of the fact that in a sense such money would come to the land owners out of a void in which at least no labour input is directly involved. The overall mining profit can roughly be divided into three parts to be received by: 1) the producers, 2) the Government, and 3) the land owners. The producers provide the labour force, the Government provides authority and protection (in the minds of the Bellonese), and the third party, the Bellonese, get money for something which to them is a loss of arable land (the actual compensation) plus a sum (the royalty) which to the outsiders may be more or les comparable to the yield of the destroyed gardens.

The Bellonese themselves do not, however, structure their thoughts this way. They find it reasonable that the three parties

involved should each have their share, but that each party should get an *equal* part of the net profit. When confronted with the question as to what would happen to the traditional attitude of mutual help and of individual generosity according to which no one on the island is left to starve or live a much poorer life than the rest, some proponents of the introduction of a money economy on the island outrightly state that the traditions of mutual aid had already disappeared during the later years when it had been hard enough for the single head of household to harvest enough food for himself and his family. The Bellonese explain their traditional economic system in a way which may by us be described as one of constant competition and cooperation between social groups who live in a grand equilibrum embedding constant formations of alliances and divergencies. If we view the Bellonese society as a whole we might say that Bellonese culture is "characterized internally not by uniformity, but by diversity of both individuals and groups, many of whom are in continuous and overt conflict in one subsystem and active cooperation in another" (Wallace 1964: 28). Among the Bellonese there is a tendency to stress the aspect of conflict when they are to describe their own society in its present state. Among those who advocate the phosphate mining of the island the future impact of a 'new kind of life' is considered a blessing for this conflict-ridden society. The combination of money and the prospects of being able to create new and larger villages whose inhabitants may be persons who were traditional opponents, may create a new sense of municipality on the island! (But based on what? Garden of Eden ideologies are thus not a fruit of European culture alone.)

On the whole it is characteristic of the proponents of a new life with money on the island, that they tend to overlook the possible darker aspects of their future and that they foresee a dreamland of wealth and happiness when money come floating in through channels befitting and enriching their present social sphere. To them the ideal is the island of Nauru, and constant reference is made to the wealth of the Nauruans and to their carefree and happy life. In fact, no adult Bellonese men have been to the island of Nauru, but heard it described by the people of the ABCD Company as an island comparable to a Bellona of the future.

Voices of warning

Although the majority of Bellonese favour the aspects of having their island mined, a minority group of islanders is more or less violently objecting to the plans. The 'anti-mining group' consists chiefly of younger men who have either had higher education abroad (one of them at the University of Papua-New Guinea) or who have lived for longer periods in Honiara. A few adult land owners, among them some who possess considerable areas of land rich in phosphate, have joined the No-sayers.

When those Bellonese who advocate the mining scheme are asked why other Bellonese are still objecting to the plans, they commonly stress that those who are against are 'school-trained' individuals, and that the advocates do not know why they oppose mining. A few have hinted that it may be because they already live in Honiara, and that they do not care whether people on Bellona itself get rich or not.

It is a fact, however, that the opponents of mining have done very little to spread their points of view on Bellona. One of them said that this was a hopeless task as people did not want to listen to him anyway when he talked about the issue. He even accused people of the island of having been indoctrinated by people from the ABCD Company to such an extent that any communication was impossible at this stage.

It is worth noting, however, that although the group objecting to mining on Bellona is comparatively small, it may in the long run, have a much larger political influence on the turn of events than one would expect. Being well educated, and mostly living in Honiara, they can do more to prevent what they believe to be harmful developments on their island, than those Bellonese who remain at home and favour any move towards the introduction of a cash economy. Above we have attempted to draw a picture of why the majority of Bellonese favour the plans of mining the phosphate of the island. In this section we shall present the points of view of those who oppose the exploitation of Bellona by foreign Companies, and also the subsequent introduction of additional cash on the island.

The opponents of mining express themselves in a way which makes direct quotations from interviews with them more self-explanatory

than are interviews with the advocates of mining who have been under less influence by European modes of thought, and whose way of thinking therefore commonly has to be interpreted in a more indirect way to become intelligible to the European reader.

One of the opponents of mining, a young Bellonese who has received his formal training at the university level, made the following statement expressing some general points of view of the group which advocates the keep-hands-off-Bellona point of view:

> "Before the arrival of Europeans we were living in a world of our own on the island. We had our own political system, we had our own religion, we had our own economic system, and all these things sum up to a culture. Now we are living in an era of changes in the island, as it is now part of the Solomons, and the Solomons is a part of the world. Now(adays) we believe in development, but we do not believe in destruction. As far as the island is concerned, mining is a form of destruction... I don't believe people would be able to live on the island after mining. When we move away from this place we will lose a lot of things. We lose our own social and cultural identity, we lose our influence on Solomon politics, we lose our whole existence."

In a sense this quotation speaks for itself. The speaker is concerned with the future of the island, and, having lived abroad for a considerable number of years, he has upon his return to Bellona (the interview was made on the island) come to realise that the present way of life on the island has certain qualities which life under western conditions is missing. He is, in a sense, both a romanticist and a tough realist at the same time. To him and to his fellow opponents, life with a cash economy does not fit the present Bellonese culture. If cash is introduced, the present culture will fall apart:

> "At the moment things are very much like the past, except for the religion, the political system, and other things. But the island is still practising subsistence economy. Now this is one of the problems: the mining will not give us enough money to live generation after generation on the island, because at

the moment people (here) are not relying on foreign things to survive on the island. There is some involvement within the island with cash economy, but on the whole the island is still operating under a system of subsistence economy. When something like mining comes, clearly we would not have any place for gardening, we wouldn't be able to live here without money. When we look at what we shall get out of mining it is not enough... and people who actually receive the money will spend it, spend all the money, and they will see the problems themselves... and it will be worse for the next generation because mining to us is a foreign idea - such as the concept of living in a community where you have to pay for everything... water... hospitals... political leaders. (Before) people used to have many of these things without having to pay - although they had to pay for it in other forms (than with money)..... Getting involved in cash economy entirely is nowhere near self-reliance. We are more self-reliant at the moment on the island, small though it is, and the style of living is just a style of living. To want to live like Europeans or white people is just a crazy idea because it is just another style of living."

Having lived abroad this young Bellonese sees his own culture in another perspective. He has come to appreciate certain values of life on Bellona which he has not found in western civilisation.

The point is not, however, that the Bellonese themselves do not appreciate these values, but that they do not see them, or express them directly, because such values are intrinsic parts of their lives; they are simply ways of living. The prospect of getting cash coming into the island will to them just mean an additional asset which may help people to live the same kind of life but in a better way. They do not believe that their values will change. Obviously this has to do with their present admiration for everything done or created by the white man. If they, as Bellonese, can share his worldly goods they will be able to use them in perhaps an even better way than the white man has done. They have no feeling that the introduction of cash economy on a grand scale on Bellona will also alter their present culture to a very great extent, because in their minds, cash can be compared to, and used in the same way as those assets which they are about to lose because of a serious decline in the yields of their gardens.

The opponents see this in another way. One of them said to me:

"Torben, especially you understand that there are a lot of people here who have more land than others. There are some families who are more respected than others. But still... with regard to people who own more land than others, there is a system of shifting gardening here so that in a way the land belongs to the people. If I own a piece of land our shiftening gardening system makes provisions for other people to use my land and for me to use their land. But when these people (the representatives of the ABCD Company) came and talked to these people (the Bellonese) about the mining and they mentioned things like free schools and water supplies and all this, people got the impression that everyone, each one of us, is going to become a millionaire; not realising that if we switch over from our subsistence economy the land will be transformed into cash, and the money will not be used in the same way that people have used other people's land for gardening. And people who have no land will not be entitled to get any money. I mean, they will not get any money for land, I mean not as much as people who have a lot of land. So when there is to be phosphate mining on Bellona the first thing to be introduced will be a cash economy system. There will be a lot of people who have more money than others. Because of our cultural traditions people are (now) prepared to share their land with other people. But if the land is transformed into cash I don't think that people will be prepared to give money to other people."

Regarding the complaint of the Bellonese that there is a decline in the quality of the island's garden land, the opponents of mining also blame the introduction of cash on the island for this. They claim, for example, that because of the desire for cash, people on the island tend to spend less time on garden work now and more on making traditional or quasi-traditional carvings which can be sold overseas. They admit, however, that it may be true that the soil has been overworked for a period due to overpopulation, but they reiterate that to sell the island for mining is not a solution to the problems. As far as they can see there is not enough phosphate on the island to give the individual a reasonable

income for more than a short period. The phosphate can be mined out in about nine years' time at the most, and what is going to happen then?

Another reason for the decline in food on the island is, in the minds of the opponents, the present migration from Bellona to other parts of the Solomons, particularly Honiara. Not only has the island lost a considerable number of its manpower, but considerable quantities of locally grown food has to be sent abroad to supplement the poor wages of the Bellonese working abroad.

Faced with the problems of poor yields from their gardens, the advocates of mining tend to minimize the cultural importance of land on Bellona. The opponents, however, constantly stress its importance, both as a source of food for the islanders themselves, and also on account of the emotional attachment of the Bellonese to their land:

> "You know how we feel about land, and how we people feel about the graves of our dead relatives. A lot of people say that they are prepared for mining here, but I just don't know if they are prepared to see a bulldozer digging out the bones of their fathers... I don't think they are prepared to see a bulldozer clearing the land which was once owned by their fathers and grandfathers, the lands which he has a lot of stories (traditions) based on to be proud of. You know, people here usually refer back to the past. When they see a piece of land or a small area it will always remind them of their great-grandfathers and their fathers and their parents, and, you know, their people."

It is not only the young and educated Bellonese living in Honiara who lend voices to the expression of such emotional attachment to the land. Even some adult and wealthy landholders who live on Bellona have expressed similar views. An obvious question to the opponents of mining must follow: if the general statement concerning an attitude of attachment such as the one expressed above is widespread on the island, why then, does a majority of Bellonese still favour a future mining of their island? The opponents answer that people have been so indoctrinated by the representatives of the ABCD Company that their views have become distorted.

They have become 'selfish and money-greedy', and, moreover, some of the older landholders are now so old that they do not really care about what happens in the future. One opponent said:

> "Prestige and status was very important in our society (before). I think that a lot of people now realise that new things, like education and all these things, and religion, this Christianity, seem to take the place of these things. So perhaps they don't really mind what happens; and they have their own opinions; and they forget about the society, or they forget about Bellona as a group."

To some extent this statement falls in line with what we have expressed above concerning the possible reasons for the new attitude towards land on Bellona: during the new social order which arrived with the introduction of Christianity and which was reinforced by the decline of the quality of the soil, status and prestige became on the island more a matter of education and of attachment to such external authorities as the missions and the Government (Christensen, 1967). Being wealthy in land thus became less important in relation to getting a good education. The opponents of mining have seen this too, but they tend to criticise this attitude rather than to attempt to understand it as a general and almost inevitable trend.

As will be remembered the majority of people on Bellona have not only stated that cash is now needed to help their children to a better education, but also to enable them to pay the taxes levied upon them by the Central Islands' Council. Evidently a tax of *eight* dollars per year for every adult male is a heavy burden on members of a society with almost no cash income at the present.

When confronted with this problem the opponents of mining express the view that the question of taxes is a political matter, and that, rather than selling themselves out of their own island, the Bellonese should negotiate with the council in order to get a cut down in their taxes during the present period of scarcity. They seem to think that their claims would be received favourably by the authorities.

Some advocates of mining have mentioned that they also need cash for traveling, not for general pleasure, but in order to be able

to visit their kinsmen in Honiara, and to pay for the same kinsmen to come to Bellona. The existence of a regular weekly flight from the island to the capital makes it natural and tempting to seek means to buy air tickets to the capital rather than waiting for months for ships which can provide them with a cheaper passage.

The opponents, however, claim this an unnecessary luxury, and seem to feel that the need for cash to buy air tickets or even to go abroad at all cannot be justified excuses for taking such a drastic step as to permit foreigners to mine their island.

When talking of the blessings of mining the Bellonese constantly refer to Nauru, as mentioned above. They know of it as an island with the highest per capita income in the world, and they visualize a Bellona which will reach an almost similar position. The opponents see this otherwise:

> "The difference between Nauru and Bellona is that the phosphate deposit on Nauru is much bigger, a hundred times bigger than that of this island. Another thing is: Although Nauru is of about the same size as Bellona as an island it is a country on its own, so all the money that comes out of Nauru most of it goes back to Nauru... But in the case of Bellona the Government (of the Solomons) will have a bigger share if this place is going to be mined... the Company that would mine the island and the Government would take most of the money out from the island. So they (Bellona) would never be anyway like Nauru. Another thing is: in Nauru not everybody is rich. I have met a lot of poor Nauruans..."

Unavoidably the problems of comparing Bellona with the independent state of Nauru have led to discussions about secession of Rennell and Bellona from the rest of the Solomons. As mentioned above, people who favour mining feel that if mining begins *on the* two islands they should not secede, allegedly because they would be dependent on the technical aid from the Solomons during the mining process, and to some extent also on foreign (non-Polynesian) labour. However, if there is to be no mining it is a widespread feeling on the island, and especially among those who favour mining, that this would make secession necessary. The reason for this is, that a situation of no mining would force people to revert

to their traditional way of life, to give up schools, and to live from the island without any support from the outside. This is obviously a very theoretical solution. Most Bellonese would therefore rather see a situation in which the two islands secede from the Solomons (whose rulers are Melanesians who according to the Bellonese do not care about the well-being of the Polynesians on the two islands) and become politically attached to some other country ruled by Europeans. Australia has been mentioned in this connection (and even Denmark, obviously because so many Danes have visited the island over the years!).

The opponents to mining have other views on the question of secession:

> "The idea of the people (of Rennell and Bellona) seceding from the rest of the Solomons if there is no mining... I am not saying that I am in favour or that I am against. I think it is something that we have to look up (discuss). We must relate this type of issue to what is going on in the Solomons today. It depends on what type of country (we shall be getting) or what the people have in mind. If they are going to secede from the Solomons, how would they like our island to operate as a country of its own... ?"

Thus spoke one of the younger Bellonese. Another said:

> "I don't believe what these people say, because - I can easily go back because I would not mind taking up the old religion, but a lot of people who are in favour of mining, you know, it would frighten them to think that they are going away from the truth which is Christianity. So there are lots of things which would prevent them from going back one hundred percent."

To the outsider this way of arguing about secession on Bellona seems somewhat irrational. One might think that those who favoured mining would also feel an urge to secede because this would, at least in theory, give them a bigger share of the total profits from mining. At least they would not see the Government of the Solomons take their large part.

The opponents of mining have their own theory as to why no Bellonese argue this way:

> "The reason why they do not think that way is because it has been put in thir mouth by the Company representatives.... They (the Company and its adherents on Bellona) put it in this way that it may put the Government under pressure to give them a (mining) license. If it was their own opinions, if it was something which originated from the people themselves, they would say: if we are to get more benefits from this mining we would be better off seceding from the rest of the Solomons. But that is not how they look at it. All they want is to see the mining happening now. All they want is to see the ABCD Company getting a license."

Below we shall deal in more detail with the other latent and manifest conflicts in respect to mining or not mining of the island. While the adherents of mining seem to put almost blind trust in the blessings with which the Company can provide the island, the opponents are highly sceptical about the motives and tactics of the ABCD Company. They tend to consider the Company incompetent as far as the actual mining goes, and they suspect them of being a group of land speculators with no other intention than that of obtaining a mining license for Bellona which they can then, in turn, resell to some other big mining company of foreign origin. They believe that the reason why the Company's representatives have been so overwhelmingly generous in their offers to the people of Bellona is that their prime interest is to sell the idea of mining on the island to another party and to the Government, but that they will be freed of the fulfillment of their promises if their license is taken over by another company.

Another question in the disputes between the two opposing groups has to do with the ways they look upon one another. Everybody on the island agrees that it would be extremely deplorable if the divergence of opinions concerning mining should lead to open internal conflicts. What has been said above seems to show, however, that such a conflict is imminent. The advocates of mining accuse the opponents of lack of interest in progress for the island. At least they do not understand why they have not spoken

out publicly more frequently concerning their opinions. In private they express suspicion that the reason is, as mentioned above, that most of the opponents live in Honiara earning good wages and thus being less interested in the future of anything but their own. The opponents themselves object vehemently to this point of view. Some of them state, and rightly so, that they would become more rich in money by returning to the island and having their land mined as some of them are, in fact, great landowners themselves. They feel, however, that they act more in the interest of the people of Bellona by living in the capital (although they prefer life on the island), as this keeps them close to the political center of the Solomons where the final decisions concerning the future of the island will be taken.

The question now is: who is, in fact, going to decide the future of the island? There is no doubt that from a legal point of view the Solomon Islands Government has the final say, but that after a license has been granted negotiations concerning compensations, royalties, etc., will have to take place between the three parties involved: the people of Bellona, the Government, and the mining company.

In this connection it seems highly interesting that the opponents of mining, while in theory favouring democratic ideas in the Western sense of the word, admit that democracy cannot be carried to its extreme on Bellona. They do not favour a general referendum on the island showing how the people as a whole feel towards the question of mining. One spokesman for the opponents made the following remarkable and enlightening statement:

> "I would disagree with the idea of carrying out any referendum on the island to find out whether the people want mining or not - because the majority of the people already wants mining.... because of the direct involvement of the Company representatives with the people with regard to their proposal of mining the island. You understand the land system of the island. It is so complex. So although in democracy one person should have one vote; if we are going to hold an election, we would argue: why should this person have any right for this island to be mined? And the argument would be: he is a person, he is a Bellonese. But if we come to the question of who owns the land,

who owns that piece of land and all these things, you would find that say, if a person owns a lot of land, if his vote is going to be equal to this person's vote, then we are coming to something like a company. The island is no longer an island where there is a culture, where there is life, where there is everything - it is now a commodity to sell. Now, who has most rights to the land? The landowners. Not the people who share in the use of his land, but the person who owns it. So can... a person who has no land at all, is it right that his vote should be equal to this person if we are going to sell this island? Because if the island is going to be mined, if there is a benefit at all, what is he going to get out of that?... Or on the other hand, if this person is objecting because he has a lot of feelings for his land, why should this person without a piece of land put that man (the landowner) down? Or why should he sell this person's land by use of his vote? So I think that I would object to the idea of holding some kind of referendum, to count, to show hands or whatever (concerning) whether you like this place to be mined or not... When it comes to a place like Bellona where the customary land is involved (where) a mining would destroy a people's culture and our land tenure system is so complicated, even a voting system which may seem democratic, is useless."

When presenting the views of those Bellonese who advocate mining of the island we pointed out that it is a general feeling on the island that if mining is to take place it must be now or never. We have (page 23) given the main reasons behind this attitude. In answer to this the opponents of mining claim that they welcome this because they think it unrealistic that any mining could take place within the next decade or so. They point to the fact that prospecting, trial mining, and reassessment on Rennell in connection with the possible mining of the island's bauxite has lasted for nearly a decade, and the mining has not begun yet. They cannot believe that the ABCD would start their mining project on Bellona on the basis of a prospecting made by another company alone, as stated in the Company's 'Preliminary Mining Plan'. Consequently a new series of prospects, etc. will have to be made in connection with a possible mining of Bellona phosphate, and this will, in their minds, take a considerable number of years to carry out.

Another problem with which both adherents and opponents have been concerned is the question of whether the mined areas can be restored and made suitable for cultivation. It seems, however, characterestic that the adherents talk less about this than do the opponents. Those who favour mining tend to regard the selling out of their land more or less as a fait accompli. Naturally they nurture some little hope that they may even get their arable land back, but it seems of secondary importance. The opponents, however, have expressed doubts and even outright suspicion in connection with the Company's plans of restoring the land. They simply do not believe that it can be done. The question is said to have been raised during a meeting with a Company representative; the people were told that soil could be shipped from Guadalcanal and filled into the holes together with old tree trunks and coral limestone and, also, that the land might be fertilised. No opponents believe that such a plan will ever be carried out. One asked directly which company would be foolish enough to venture into such an enterprise from which it would not receive any profit whatsoever. One elderly, very prestigious Bellonese who is against the mining visualises his island as being one consisting of big useless holes only, when mining has been completed. "Where are we going to live on such an island? Down in the holes?" he said scornfully.

The opponents of mining also have their own views on the question of education as a benefit which can be bought for cash by the Bellonese:

> "They (the ABCD Company) promise them (the Bellonese) something like education facilities (see p. 10). Now I don't think that mining would last for even ten years. I've been to school for more than ten years, for fourteen years, and I do not see how this mining would bring in good education to the people, because by the time they have worked out the whole thing (the phosphate), when the whole thing has been exhausted, they leave the place. They (the Company people) do not have to go and find jobs for them somewhere in Honiara. Now this type of training that they have been telling them (the Bellonese) about, going overseas we would have a lot of chances to take some scholarships from the Company to go and get some training overseas. But it is not

worth anything compared to people's life and our own community and our people."

Not only do the opponents feel that the mining period will be too short and the money too little for people to receive the education they believe they will be able to get, but they also feel that the Bellonese on the whole are totally unprepared for living under cash conditions. We have mentioned this above. The opponents visualise a future life with cash on Bellona as one similar to the life lived in the capital of the Solomons, Honiara:

"They (the people of Bellona) just don't have the experience when they are asked to pay water bills, electricity bills, higher taxes... it is more straining than the problems they are facing on the island... When I come to the island I never once fear that I might die of hunger. But I do at times in Honiara. Sometimes I don't know what I am going to eat, sometimes I don't know how I am going to survive for the next few days before pay-day..."

To the young and educated people Bellona has in a sense become a Garden of Eden compared to life in the surrounding and harsh world. And it is obvious that they do not wish this Garden destroyed by mining.

Obviously there is a severe conflict betwen the democratic principles believed in by the young, part-Westernized Bellonese and the traditional social system of their home island. In their minds both the traditional ideology of equal distribution of food, which worked on principles of equality through the redistribution carried out by wealthy landowners and resulted in an almost uniform standard of living - and also the Western ideology of democracy, are good ways of solving social problems; but they cannot believe in the two systems being incorporated into the framework of the same culture, in this case that of Bellona - at least not at the present.

With regard to the future of mining, one final source of conflict should be mentioned, namely in relation to the ownership of land. Such conflicts have been the cause of incessant fights on the island ever since the first immigrants came to Bellona 25

generations back. Before the advent of Christianity such conflicts were mainly 'solved' by incessant interlineage raids and violence. When Christianity put a ban on such raids, actual fighting eased off, although it may still take place at infrequent intervals. Most cases involving disagreement about the rights to customary land are now taken to court, primarily to the local court on Bellona, but if an agreement cannot be reached there, the cases are transferred to the Magistrate's court of the Capital of the Solomons. With the institution of a body of 'chiefs' on the island an attempt is made, as mentioned above, to lay down local laws about the inheritance and ownership of land, stipulating in some detail the rules of succession, and based on local custom. If these laws are passed, a considerable number of people who now claim ownership to certain tracts of land may lose their present rights, or these rights may become the subject of serious disputes, especially in cases in which individuals claim such rights through matrilineal descent, or through taking possession of land belonging to other lineages in spite of the fact that there were still male survivors of these lineages. The details of the complicated land tenure system cannot be explained here; but it is obvious, especially to the opponents of mining, that the prospects of compensation for land at mining will give new rise to disagreements about ownership, even where such disagreements have been dormant during periods in which the areas were not cultivated. The fact that sudden decisions will have to be made as to who is going to receive compensation for mined land, even though it is not cultivated at the present, will unveil old disagreements and cause an endless number of court cases and perhps even outright fights on the island.

A structural analysis

What has been presented above is obviously nothing but a series of verbalised thought processes or strategies laid by a group of actors in and around a small Polynesian island, and concerning how to deal with the immediate future in which new possibilities for some kind of action has arisen out of the prospects of mining.

The key problem with which such thoughts concerning possible strategies is concerned is whether or not the people of Bellona should engage themselves in economic transactions with an outside party with the purpose of trading their land for cash.

In a sense the problems in our analysis are fairly simple. One reason is that the present piece of research has been carried out at a time when the actual complexity of the entire situation was unknown to those actors who were planning their strategies. The majority of the planners had no way of foreseeing that their decision may trigger a chain reaction of events which will have considerable consequences for the organization of their future way of life, and thereby also on their culture for example on the functional level.

A simple model of the Bellona problem may be the following:

An external group of actors have informed the people of Bellona that they may be willing to take over the majority of the garden areas of the island. In exchange the Bellonese will receive a (so far unknown) amount of cash which they may use as suits them best.

The people of Bellona make an evaluation of the land in question and come to the conclusion that their land in its present state has lost a considerable amount of its value compared to about 10 to 15 years ago. At that time they refused to consider a transformation of land into money because they set such a high price on their land that they thought it unrealistic to believe that they could receive an adequate compensation for it in cash. With the decline in the value of their land and with the offer reiterated, they are reconsidering the issue and have declared themselves willing to enter into a state of bargaining over a possible transaction.

The implicit reason for this is that they believe that by converting land into cash they may be able to preserve their present

culture: land was previously a means of providing the islanders with food and, indirectly, with social status. At the present its yield is declining, and this decline has not only deprived them of the possibilities of getting enough food but also of entering into the system of competition for higher social status. Individuals or kinship-based groups can no longer make large feasts with distribution of food, which previously enabled them to maintain or raise their social status on the island. As a consequence of this they seek other means of cementing the present culture. Being aware that another means of acquiring high prestige on the island and of simply getting enough to eat is the possession of cash, they see the possibility of selling their land to prospective miners as a way out of their problems.

To be of any value for the continuation of the present culture, this sale must, however, take place now, in order that those who own land at the present can also handle the possible substitute for land, cash, in such a way that cultural continuity is secured. It is, in this connection, of interest to note that this view is not held only by wealthy landholders who seem to have an immediate interest in the prospect of earning more cash, but also by persons with little, or no, land. The wish for a continuity of the present culture is thus also an indicator of a general satisfaction with a social system, which, when seen from the outside, may look as one of inequality, but when seen from the inside, is felt as being the one which serves the island best, particularly because the apparent social 'injustice' is by the Bellonese experienced as one which, although involving conflicts and competition on certain levels, as a final result has a rather even distribution of goods (see p. 27).

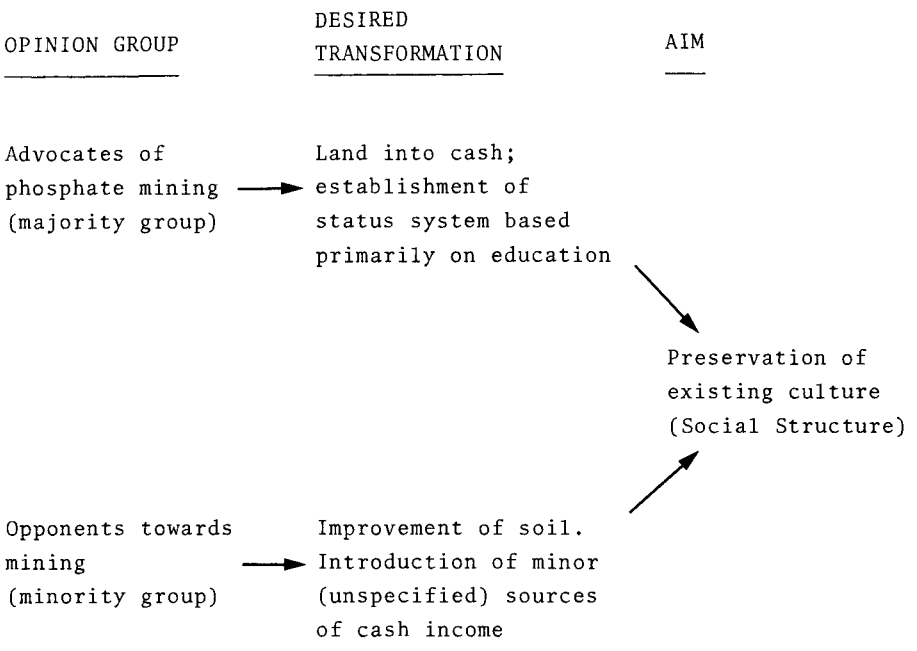
The Bellonese are aware that on the organisational level, the introduction of a cash economy may result in certain changes: New persons will appear in old roles; new traits, such as stores, (better) schools, and hospitals, may be introduced; residence patterns may change; the influx of more material goods may raise the standard of living. The point is, however, that those who advocate mining see these changes as variations in elements within an existing organisation and not as changes in the functional relations between the variables which constitute the culture of their society. Their strategy is thus fundamentally based on the

concept that the transformation of land into cash will be a means of achieving progress for the society, but that this progress will be one that takes place on the organisational level, not transforming the culture of the society as such, but, on the contrary, keeping this culture intact.

Obviously the Bellonese themselves do not generally explain their thoughts by using terms like 'culture' or 'organisation'. However, if we consider these terms on the low level of abstraction in which they have been used in this paper, they have their correspondance in the Bellonese way of thinking and talking. By culture we simply mean the pattern of uniformity according to which the society is organised. Organisation is the empirically observable pattern of configurations which take place within the culture. When explaining their society to outsiders the Bellonese themselves commonly verbalise a set of cultural rules according to which life is lived, or ought to be lived, on the island. When presenting the enquirer with data showing how specific people act in specific situations they show us how their society is organised.

The Bellona culture could thus be likened to a mobile whose single units move constantly among each other when hanging in the (trade) wind, but always under the restriction of its shape and construction.

The present case involving two different opinions concerning the question of mining may well be seen in the light of this analytical abstraction. It seems obvious that both parties aim at the same goal: the preservation of the present culture (the shape and the construction of our mobile). Opinions, however, differ when it comes to the question of the ways and means of achieving this goal. A simple sketch may illustrate this:



The sketch shows the different strategies involved in the thought processes of the Bellonese in relation to the problem of mining.

The advocates of mining seem to feel that by converting a subsistence economy into a cash economy they can preserve the present culture and, in addition, achieve 'progress'; in the sense of creating a higher standard of living on the organisational level, but still within the existing culture.

The opponents of mining feel that the introduction of a cash economy will completely alter the culture of the island, and lead not only to its breakdown on the internal level, but also to the complete loss of ethnic identity of the Bellonese, with the result that on the political level the future of the individual will be dictated to him by a Melanesian majority in the Solomon Islands. To reach the goal of preserving the present culture of the island and thereby also its unity and identity the opposers believe that the existence of the system of subsistence economy is essential, as the entire culture is based on it. In their

minds the only way to preserve Bellona as a functioning cultural unit within the Solomon Islands is to improve the quality of its soil and perhaps to find some moderate means of furnishing the islanders with a minimum of cash which may enable them to acquire some items from abroad which may make it possible for them to preserve the present standard of living, including their present contact with the outside world.

In both 'thought models' presented above the stress is on the preservation of Bellona in its present state. Admittedly this concept is in the minds of the Bellonese vague and fuzzy, and admittedly some young men on the island have claimed that they want 'progress' for Bellona, and that they want to live the life of the white man. There is no reason to doubt that they mean this; but it must be pointed out that their views of the future are based on very little knowledge of the actual implications of living under the structure of Western civilisation, and what they have said must be interpreted as a wish to see a Bellona which works under the present culture, but with the addition of white man's goods. Which obviously not is the same as to say that had they been aware of its implications they would wish for Western civilisation and culture(s) to penetrate or radically change their island's culture.

Opponents to mining as well as its advocates feel that Bellona for the present has values, extrinsic as well as intrinsic, which should be preserved. Divergence is restricted to the opinions on which strategies would best achieve this result.

Conclusion

Although both parties of Bellonese who are in disagreement about which attitude to take in regard to mining have visions of the future which are fuzzy, vague, and somewhat inconsistent, there seems no doubt that they both favour a new Bellona retaining the present culture but equipped with more ample supplies, especially of local products but also of some Western goods. Even the more 'advanced' and politically minded among the islanders seem to feel that the present social system is more 'democratic' and egalitarian than most systems found in other parts of the world known to them.

As mentioned several times above, the disagreements concern the question of whether the introduction of a cash economy will move their present culture away from, or towards, their vague goal of creating a good life on the island.

The view expressed by the majority that cash will help them to a better life is based on a reliance on extreme goodwill from their foreign adversaries in the transaction process and also on the notion that money will do to the island what land and crops did before.

It seems obvious, however, that the exchange of money and land cannot become one based on equality, neither between the partners in the transaction, nor in the outcome of the deal. The power in such a transaction rests with the party who is in possession of most information about the external world and about the circumstances in which one's adversary or partner is placed. In the present case the ABCD Company and the Government of the Solomon Islands possess more information of this kind than do the Bellonese (Paine, 1974). This is perhaps the most crucial aspect of the whole situation. The Bellonese have very little information about the external world or about the actual position - or strategies - of their adversaries overseas. Nor do they possess much self-knowledge, simply because they have no means of foreseeing the actual consequences of their planned transactions or of their social situation under a cash economy. This puts them in an extremely unequal position in an exchange situation, and they are, for that reason, bound to become the losing part.

As for the group of people who oppose mining on Bellona, it is in a somewhat different situation. Being more Westernised and being a group which comprises individuals who do not only have an extensive knowledge of Solomon Islands politics in general, but also a theoretical training and practical knowledge of general economics and sociology, it is as a group in a much better position to evaluate the power structure and the politics behind the moves of the Company and the Government. When it is added to this that its members have an extensive knowledge of their own island culture and the actual implications of a mining enterprise for the culture, it is obvious that they are also in a better position to analyse the present situation on Bellona.

With the common goal of the two Bellonese parties in mind, and with a basis in extensive discussions with the Bellonese resulting in the foregoing report, the present author does not hesitate to issue a warning against the proposed mining enterprise on Bellona.

If it is really true that even those who favour mining wish the outcome of the introduction of a cash economy to be an island society with a culture which closely resembles the one existing at the present, they should be informed by responsible people in the Solomon Islands that their present positive attitude towards mining is based on false expectations. The introduction of a cash economy on Bellona will very likely convert the island into an entirely new type of society, complete with class fights, power struggles on a much greater scale, dissatisfaction both internally and externally, and with a complete loss of all or most of those intrinsic values (emotional attachment to the land and its people, feeling of cultural identity, pride in the past) which they now treasure and which, being intrinsic, will be lost in the process of transactions with a foreign adversary who may never realise their existence and who therefore cannot take them into consideration in a bargaining situation.

The present report has come to its abrupt conclusion. It is only the first chapter of an analysis of a process of radical change on a Polynesian outlier island. The contents of the next chapters cannot be foreseen at this stage. They will be written by history and are likely to be penetrated by gloom.

Notes

1. ABCD is here used as a nom de plume for the mining company involved.

2. Except for the taped interviews with the few Bellonese of the opponent group who have received a higher education abroad, and who preferred to explain their views in English, all discussions and interviews from which the data in this paper have been elicited were carried out in Bellonese.

3. After this paper had been written the author received a copy of a mimeographed letter submitted to the Chief Minister of the Solomon Islands by members of the opponent group. It has been included as an appendix below.
   A copy of the submission by the pro-mining majority has not been made available to the present author.

4. Several persons have made the fairly fast publication of this analysis of the data on mining on Bellona possible.
   I owe my warmest gratitude to a considerable number of people from Bellona for their readiness to cooperate and for their hospitality during my stay on the island in 1975 and in the years before. I would have like to mention them all by names, but in view of the present situation on the island and in the Solomons in general I feel it more appropriate that they should, so far, remain anonymous.
   My warmest thanks are also due to Dr R.B. Thompson, Director of the Geology Division, Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Labour, and to Miss Anna Craven of the Solomon Islands Museum. Both have offered warm hospitality and inspiring scholarly discussions.
   In Copenhagen Drs Lois and Søren Egerod and Mrs. Lise Rishøj Pedersen have read the manuscript with much care and offered valuable advice during its preparation. I am grateful to professor Sofus Christiansen for providing me with the map of Bellona included in this paper.

The manuscript has been typeset and edited with great care, skill, and alacrity by Mrs. Nellie Stephens who has also made suggestions for alterations.
The Danish National Museum Press has gone into considerable trouble to secure the fast technical production of the paper. Warm thanks are due to them all.

Torben Monberg

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Appendix

Objection to proposed Mining on Bellona Island

As against the submission made to the Central Government by the pro-mining party on Bellona and responding to the request by the Central Government for the opposition party to produce a submission, we are herewith forwarding our reasons of objection, and attach is a list of names of those who firmly object to any mining activities on the Island. We are aware that this group is out numbered by the other party but we feel that our reasons for objecting although expressed by the minority, are thoughtfully designed to safeguard the well being of our people as a whole, now and in the future against the impact of any mining.

Bellona people is an ethnic group. Thus, we would like to maintain our own cultural, political and social identities as any other ethnic group in the Solomons do. The impact of any mining activities on the Island will be tremendous and undoubtedly will lead to extermination of this ethnic group. Physical and social development as has been done on other Islands in the Solomons can also certainly be done on Bellona Island without the Island being mined probably to compensate for any little help that has been done on the Island. We would like to see the Island developed with the rest of the Solomons without destroying it. We appreciate the little help the Government has done on the Island so far and we would like it to continue without encouraging any mining proposals.

Our political progress and influence as such attributes to the existence of the Island as it is now. It also attributes to the fact that we are a recognised group in the Solomons with our own cultural, political and social rights. However, if the Government favours the mining proposal to proceed basing on majority rule, it threatens deprivation of those rights from us.

The people of Bellona, like other communities in the Solomons, is basically a subsistence community. The entire population of the Island lives on subsistence farming. Our people have their own unique and adaptive methods of farming. However, with the impact of any mining, the people would be forced into cash economy

which they have no knowledge of and doubtless to say that such situation would only eventuate social and economic problems both to the people and the Government.

There has already been indications of strong objections to any resettlement of Rennellese in other Islands in the Solomons if mining is in full operation in Rennell. We are therefore obliged to oppose any mining proposal on Bellona for that matter and for countless reasons briefly touched on. Land ownership defers from one place to the other in the Solomons.

It is characteristic in Bellona custom that the land owner has complete rights over his land. This is a respected custom on the Island up till now, and has been equally respected by our Local Council. However, the people who have recently been nominated to the Council of Chiefs on the Island and the so called paramount Chief took advantage or rather misused their responsibility and claimed to have offered Bellona for a phosphate mining by the South Pacific Development Company. We consider that the question of majority rule is not appropriate in this case. The artificial chiefs have no rights whatsoever over other peoples land. It can be assured that this is just a mere money - craving and being irresponsible by these so-called chiefs. These chiefs cannot be used as a channel to deprive our land from us as it had been done by the whites in many parts of the Pacific and even in the Solomons. "There was no Central Authority on Bellona, no high Chief or Chiefs of the type found in a number of Polynesian Islands or Communities. Each patrilineal descent group was autonomous. No member of a different lineage had any authority over extraneous land or people". Social stratafication and the Political System - "Religion of Bellona Island". By Doctor Torben Monburg. This is a quotation from a book written by an anthropologist long before the discovery of the phosphate deposits on the Island. Our old people were then genuine about our true traditional practices. Through foreign influence the so called chiefs use their chieftain as a weapon to abuse our customs.

The impacts of the trial mining on Rennell is already noticeable. With close ethnic ties with the people of Rennell the impacts are also experienced on Bellona. The impacts of the full mining on Rennell and indirectly Bellona is far beyond the understanding of the indegenous. Whatever consequences as a result of any mining

on Rennell will be confronted by the inhabitants of both Rennell and Bellona. Rennell people will undoubtedly be forced to migrate to Bellona and we Bellona people will have no option but to accept them. For Bellona to be mined will further aggrevate the situation and create problems which will not be easy for the Government to solve.

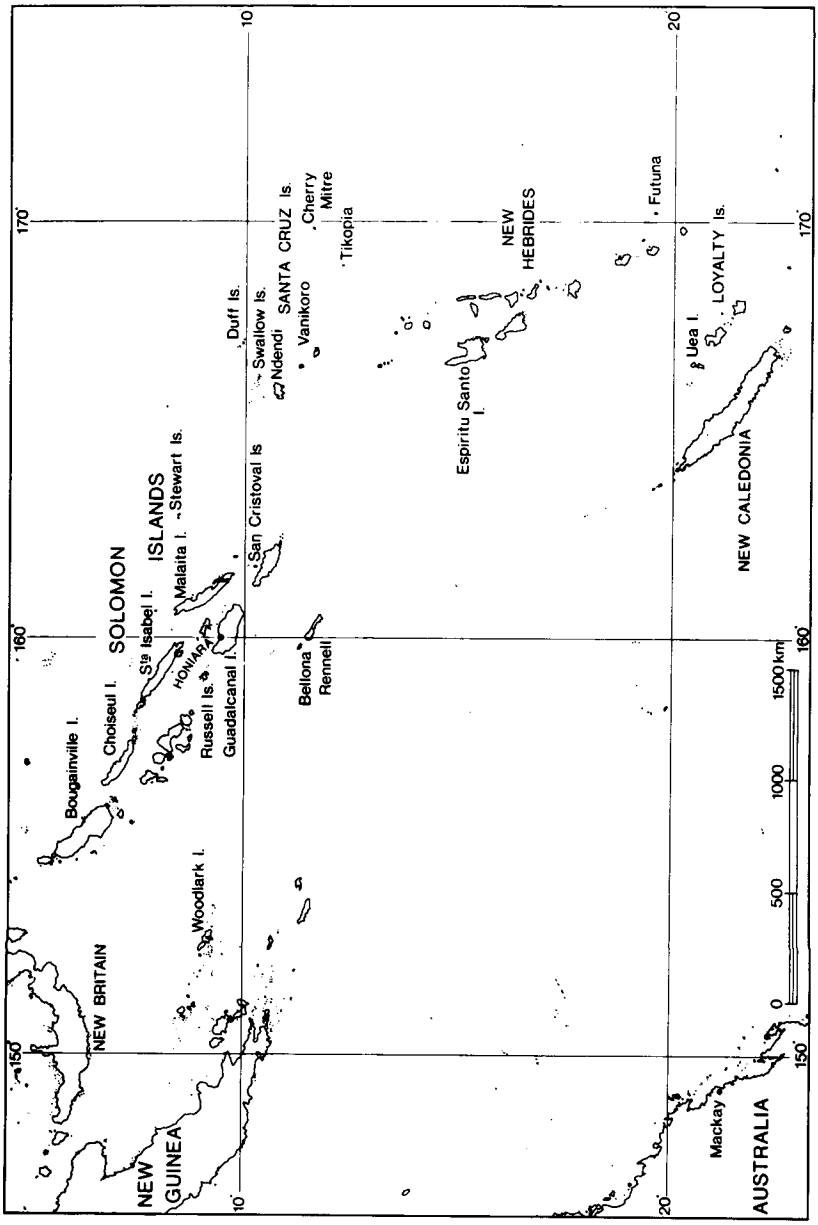
The benefits that are being promised to the pro-miners are of very short terms. The long lasting problems will persist after the company has pulled out. The idea then of resettling us anywhere is very unlikely for many reasons.

The people of Bellona will in no way wish to be resettled anywhere. This is an indirect way of disintergrating us as a people by assimilating into other communities which is no worse than what Hitler had done to the Jewish in the 2nd World War. The argument can be reversed. We will not be welcomed by any other part of the Solomons and those who are directly involved in decision making cannot deny this fact. There has been evident indication in the case of the Rennell people when the proposed resettlement scheme on Baga was flatly objected to by the Western Council and individuals. We wholeheartedly do not blame the Western Council for such reaction. We do not want to be resettled on what is termed as "public land" which is in no way true in a Solomon Island concept. This Solomon Island Government is now a black Government and thus should realise that our existance stems from land. The so called "public land" will one day go back to the rightful owners and it is an impossibility to resettle us anywhere and those who are directly involved now will not possibly resettle anybody on their own land simply because they do not want to give away their land. Land nowadays is a very touchy topic in the Solomons because the vast majority of our population in the Solomons depends on subsistence farming for their livelihood. The question of mining Bellona therefore touches us deep down into our bones thinking of the consequences that we will confront unaided. Lands in the past were bought with empty bottles, sticks of tobacco etc. when we come to realise that the landowners were robed, but nothing could be done about it because the Lands had already fallen into foreign hands, supported by their foreign laws which were designed to suit them and their way of thinking. Land can be sold for thousands or even millions of

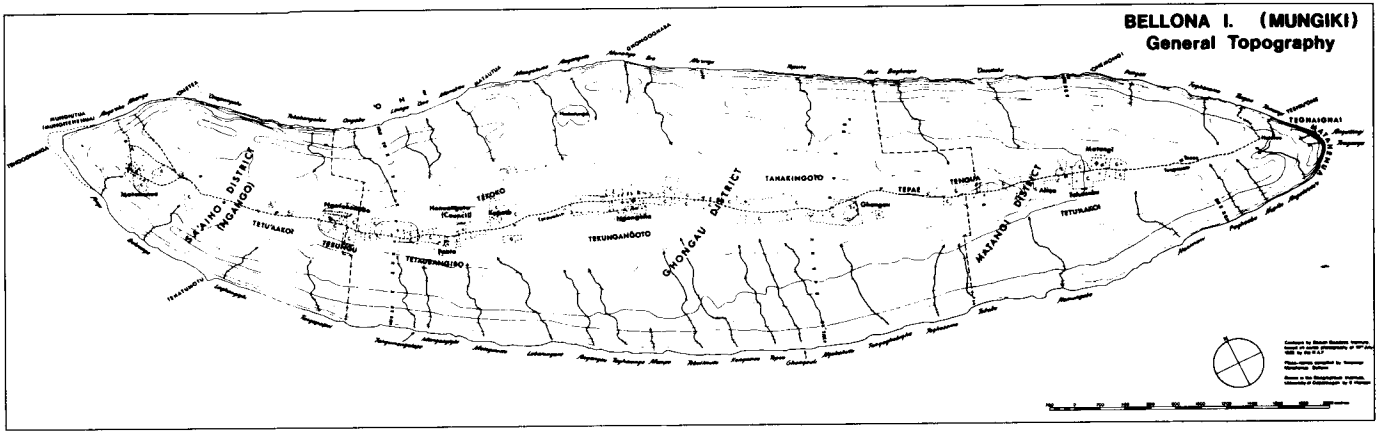
dollars today but it will be regretted in years ahead. Just as much as the land bought with empty bottles, but there will be no chance under the sun of getting it back or have it reclaimed.

The Chief Minister,
Chief Minister's Office,
Honiara.

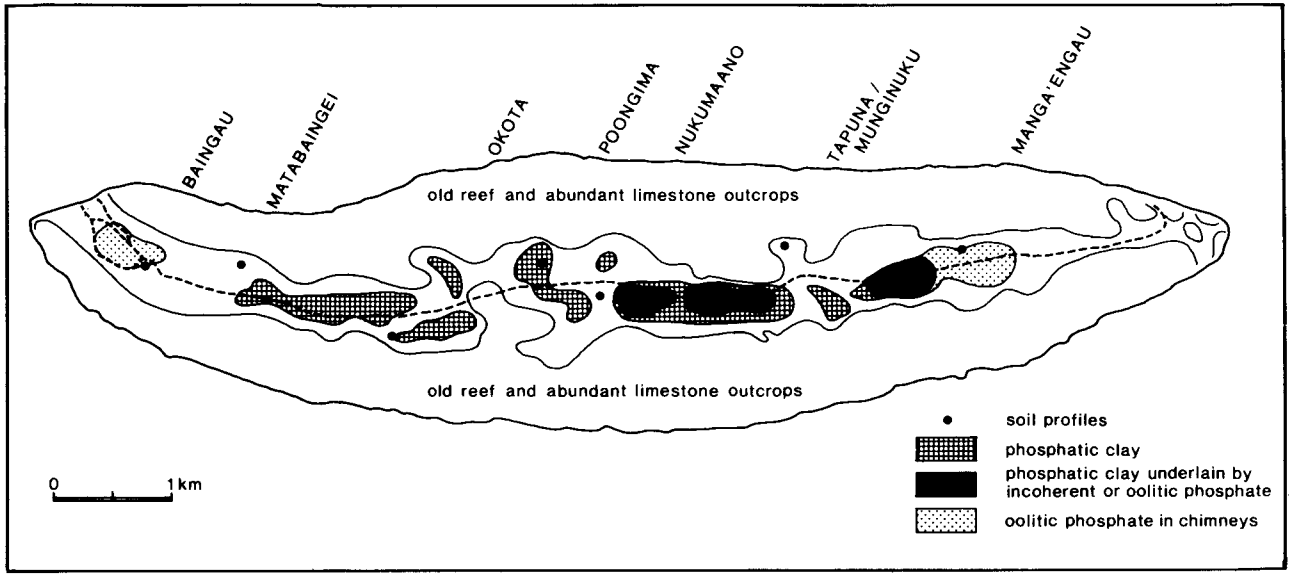
cc Minister of Natural Resources
Minister of Foreign Trade, Industry and Labour
Minister of Agriculture and Lands
Minister of Home Affairs



Map 1: Bellona Island is located near the centre of the map.



Map 2: General Topography of Bellona Island.



Map 3: Geological map of Bellona Island.

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