

ISLAND LEGACY

A HISTORY OF THE ROTUMAN PEOPLE

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and
Jan Rensel

Cover photo: Tokoara and Marsuan with their child at Noatau, on the island of Rotuma, Fiji. *A. M. Hocart, 1913.*
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

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Dedication illustration: *Sépulture des Rois à Rotuma (Burial Place of the Kings of Rotuma)*. from Duperrey 1826.

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For the ancestors

May their legacy live till the end of time



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Foreword

'Otom pumahana jī

Our sweat runs down

A Rotuman saying reminding people of all the
hard work that has been done on their behalf

Island Legacy: A History of the Rotuman People is a well-researched and superbly documented story of Rotuma's cultural heritage, including how it was, and, in many cases, how it still is. The book confirms and indeed appreciably reinforces Rotuman identity and sustains the continuing relevance of our island heritage in both general and local terms.

Readers will gain a greater appreciation of an island people who, despite their special ability to adapt to modern-day contexts in Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, and beyond, retain their own language and traditions and can still be identified as distinctively Rotuman.

This book contains valuable information about the traditional culture of Rotuma, which some may consider irrelevant to an indigenous person whose outlook has been affected by education, exposure to western culture, and a lack of interaction with *kāinaga* (kin) for several years. But for those of us who aspire to retain, and indeed enhance, our Rotuman identity, the information contained herein about our history, culture, and traditional beliefs and values is a treasure.

Attitudes have changed with the modern-day upsurge of Rotuman identity and increased political awareness among Rotumans remaining on the island as well as those in Fiji and the wider global diaspora. Rotumans are more concerned than ever about their unique traditional heritage, not only with preserving it generally, but also with sustaining particular facets of it. I therefore greatly appreciate that this book is written for Rotumans as well as for scholars and a broader general audience. It is essential reading for those Rotumans who still retain an appreciable degree of their own

traditional culture, to assist them in looking at their culture in perspective and in relation to others. It is also important for those who have begun to lose their traditional culture to a certain degree; it may enhance their interest as well as stimulate their craving for the mana of their Polynesian island background, and will serve as a basis on which their Rotuman identity may be cherished and preserved for future generations.

For non-Rotumans, *Island Legacy* provides an authentic and authoritative account of Rotuman society and culture as it was when Europeans first arrived and how it has changed since then. The care with which the authors have presented an account of considerable complexity is a demonstration of the genuinely affectionate concern that they have developed for the Rotuman people during a long and mutually beneficial association.

J. K. Konrote
Major General (Retired)

Island Legacy