

## Meetings with Rotor

- (1) With submarine reporting accounts.
- (2) Probably met him during recess of Lanka Commission.
- (3) At end of Lanka Commission (Day of Gold) Bandaranaike.
- (4) At this time he had only recently returned from Galleto, also he had been a missionary, & he was consolidating his position as the Bandaranaike's spokesman.
- (5) Transferring his zeal and training as an evangelist into the political sphere he was able to do this during the 300, even though his personal standpoint, as Bandaranaike's largest audience, differed at times from that of the majority of B.S. & at one time led to his final divorce from the community.
- (6) R became universally frustrated after the 1931 reconstitution by a growing conviction that the B.S. was being shut-down by the R.C.C., and that if he could only get to the higher ups and explain things all would be well.
- (7) This frustration was fed by the fact that both in 1930 and 1941 he was prevented from going to Suva on the eve of departure.
- (8) During the Japanese period both at Ocean Island & at Kosrae he proved a true & capable leader of his people, taking considerable notice in helping the B.S. particularly on Kosrae.
- (9) When I saw him again at Tanua in 1941 he was the unquestioned leader of the B.S., so as B. described him to me 'a seldom seen, leading his people to the promised land'.

[ Professor Maude and Mr Macdonald ]

[ Recollections of Mr Rotan during the 1930s ]

We both spent periods during the 1930s in duties (particularised elsewhere) on Ocean Island and we recollect Mr Rotan.

I, Maude, first saw Mr Rotan in late 1929 or early 1930, when I, as a cadet, was invited by the then Acting Resident Commissioner, Major Swinburne, to attend a meeting at which Rotan was a spokesman for a number of Banabans who were seeking to inspect accounts of Banaban funds (a request refused by Major Swinburne). I believe that my next meeting with him was in 1932 when I was about to go on vacation and he wished me to arrange for a lawyer to be obtained for the Banabans. I have recounted this incident in more detail elsewhere - and have explained elsewhere that Rotan was not chosen by his co-villagers as a member of my Lands Commission and I cannot recall his having attended any meetings of the Commission.

We both remember Rotan, during the 1930s, as a spokesman rather than as a politician.

Over this period, I, Macdonald, probably had more contact with him. Quite often, I used to meet the Banabans in maneabas to discuss their problems and Rotan would almost invariably be there as a spokesman on most subjects. I remember him, not so much as a complainant and not normally as treating subjects of which he was speaking (such as Banaban funds) with any bitterness - but as one who enjoyed argument and debate. He was never a member of the native government on Ocean Island but was respected by the Banaban community, for his education and ability to "think (and argue) on his feet". He was not then regarded as the leader of the community but as a man of rising influence. It was his wish to meet the Governor (from Suva) whenever possible to discuss his grievances and he did this on three occasions (Sir Murchison Fletcher, 1931; Sir Arthur Richards, 1937; Sir Harry Luke 1939) when they visited Ocean Island.

I (Macdonald) was away from Suva during most of 1937 but cannot recall that, on my return in September (meanwhile, I am informed, his attitude on pooling of funds having differed from that of many of the Banabans), his standing was substantially different. He had separated himself a little - but there was no substantial difference.

I, Maude, have the impression that Rotan's leadership arose from a belief (among the Banabans) that he had suffered on their behalf during the Japanese occupation. I recall - this would be during my visit to Rabi in May 1947 - that a Banaban described him to me as "a new Moses who led his people to the Promised Land".