

detect where Dana tinkered about with Westbrook's text as his excessively stylistic additions stand out in stark contrast to the more sober prose of Westbrook. In all probability, the absurd title and chapter headings were his handiwork. What little Dana did, he did badly. Hence it is Mason who deserves the editorial credit.

Apart from the results of Dana's efforts, *Gods Who Die* is representative of the style and quality of Westbrook's pre-Samoan reminiscences. Everything was written from memory long after the events described and, fortunately, mostly before Westbrook's memory began to falter. A close reading reveals a multitude of errors and incidents of doubtful authenticity whilst the dates, not surprisingly, are untrustworthy and often incompatible. But much of what he says is true and even some rather improbable tales have a ring of truth about them. He doubtless related actual fact, for instance, when he wrote of islanders being frightened off by a trader removing his false teeth. Similar incidents involving removable eye-balls and peg legs as well as false teeth are on record.<sup>33</sup> But one is advised to treat Westbrook's pre-Samoan reminiscences with caution as the following case studies, taken from *Gods Who Die*, demonstrate. These are the accounts of snakes on Rotuma, the visit to Abemama in 1880 and Captain Edward Rodd.<sup>34</sup>

The passage on the snakes shows Westbrook to be an unsophisticated amateur ethnographer whose accounts based on oral tradition need to be treated with extreme caution. It was improper of Westbrook not to disclose his method of getting West India Jack, his informant, to speak about old times on Rotuma. Westbrook would proceed by giving West India Jack '... a nip of Fiji rum—half a big beer glass ... which he drank neat'.<sup>35</sup> Not surprisingly, Jack became 'very talkative' on these occasions. And it was equally improper for Westbrook to inform his readers that most of Jack's '... tales were verified by the older islanders with whom I was friendly' when, in fact, they were '... verified by a very old native named Nicola who spoke very fluent "sea" English and who had been sailing in ships from boyhood, being well acquainted with most of the big seaports of the world'.<sup>36</sup> In other words, Westbrook as an old man is writing about what he heard as a twenty-year-old trader. His informant was an eighty to ninety-year-old West Indian mulatto, pickled for the occasion, relating stories of his younger days in Rotuma. These, in turn, were 'confirmed' by another 'very old native' who had spent most of his life at sea.

The second case study, Westbrook's account of the stop-over at Abemama in the Gilbert Islands, is largely a description of the eccentricities of its ruler, Tem Binoka. No one who ever saw Binoka was likely to forget him or the manner in which he operated. In his own lifetime he gained immense notoriety and prestige. Certainly, he was the most