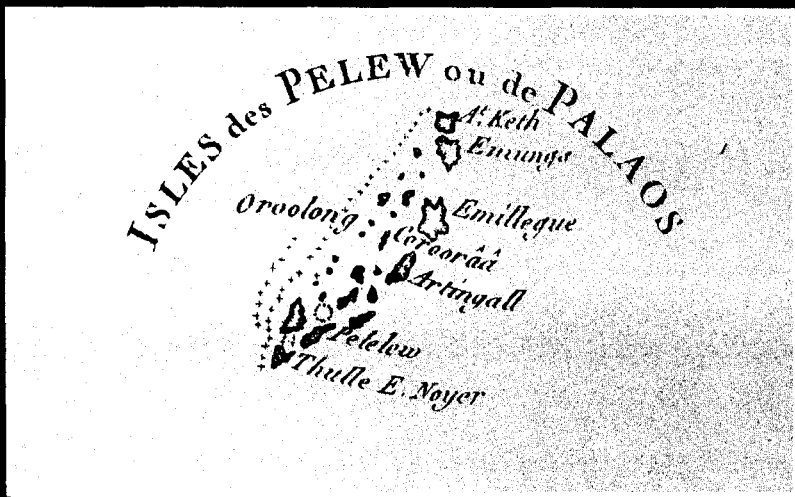
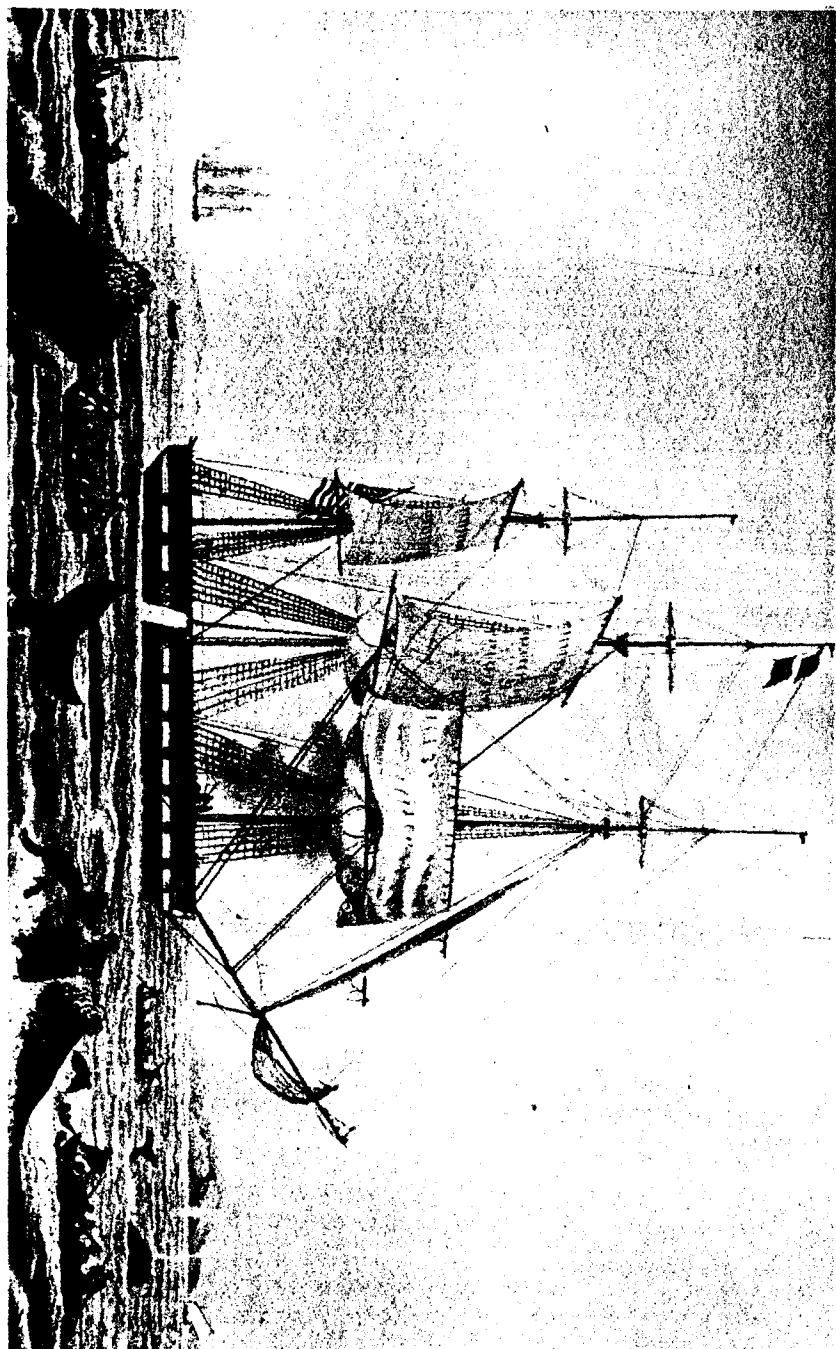


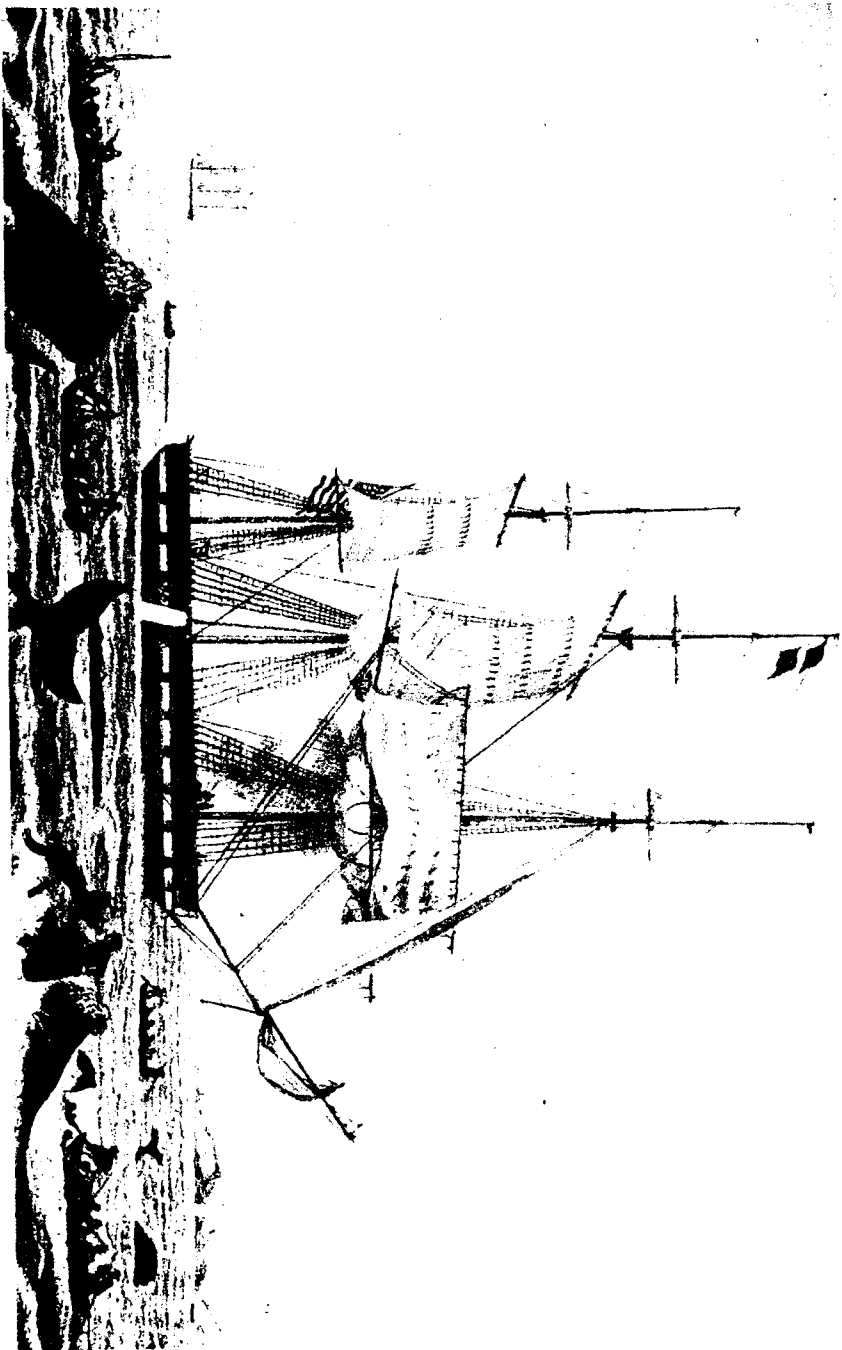
# "NAKED AND A PRISONER":

CAPTAIN EDWARD C. BARNARD'S  
NARRATIVE OF  
SHIPWRECK IN PALAU  
1832-1833



Edited, with Notes and an Introduction by  
**KENNETH R. MARTIN**





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THE KENDALL WHALING MUSEUM  
SHARON • MASSACHUSETTS

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# CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Acknowledgments  | vii |
| Introduction   | 1   |
| The Narrative of Edward C. Barnard   | 11  |
| A Postscript by one of Captain Barnard's Daughters                           | 37  |
| Epilogue   | 39  |
| Appendix A: The Crew of the <i>Mentor</i> , 1831                             | 43  |
| Appendix B.: Palauans who Accompanied the<br><i>Mentor</i> survivors to Tobi | 45  |
| Notes  | 47  |
| Bibliography   | 55  |
| Index  | 59  |

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I am grateful also to Carol Tobol and John Sheldon of the Kendall Whaling Museum, for their important production assistance. Hugo Poisson, of Falmouth, Massachusetts, rendered creative photographic help.

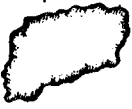
Editing Barnard's narrative has been an instructive experience for me, having generated exciting dialogues on the whys and wherefores of Pacific historiography with Dirk A. Ballendorf, Director of the University of Guam's Micronesian Area Research Center; Sandra Shaw of Walpole, Massachusetts; and Fran Hezel. I especially prize those conversations.

Kenneth R. Martin  
June 1980

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ISLES DES PELEW ou de PALAOS

A. Keth  
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Emilleque

Caroandac

Artingall

Oroolong

Pelelew

Thulle E. Noyer

Sonrol

Cudocapuce

An early conjectural map of Palau. Babeldaob appears as small northern fragments. From the French edition of Keate (1788). Private Collection.



# INTRODUCTION

Edward C. Barnard enjoyed brief notoriety as the skipper of the whale-ship *Mentor*, which had been wrecked in the Palau Islands in 1832. The tribulations of the *Mentor* crew provided an ongoing story for an interested American public for years, combining as it did a true tale of shipwreck, survival, captivity and escape. Another attraction of the *Mentor* story was the glimpse it afforded of the Palau Islands, widely celebrated in popular Western literature.

Barnard obviously knew his story to be important. He may also have felt that his shipwreck and controversial escape required some explanation. In any case, he set down his memoir of the *Mentor* incident when the event was still fresh in his mind, leaving posterity a priceless eyewitness account of nineteenth century Palau. The manuscript, in ink, covers forty-seven hand-ruled pages. Barnard probably wrote it during an 1833-1837 whaling voyage.

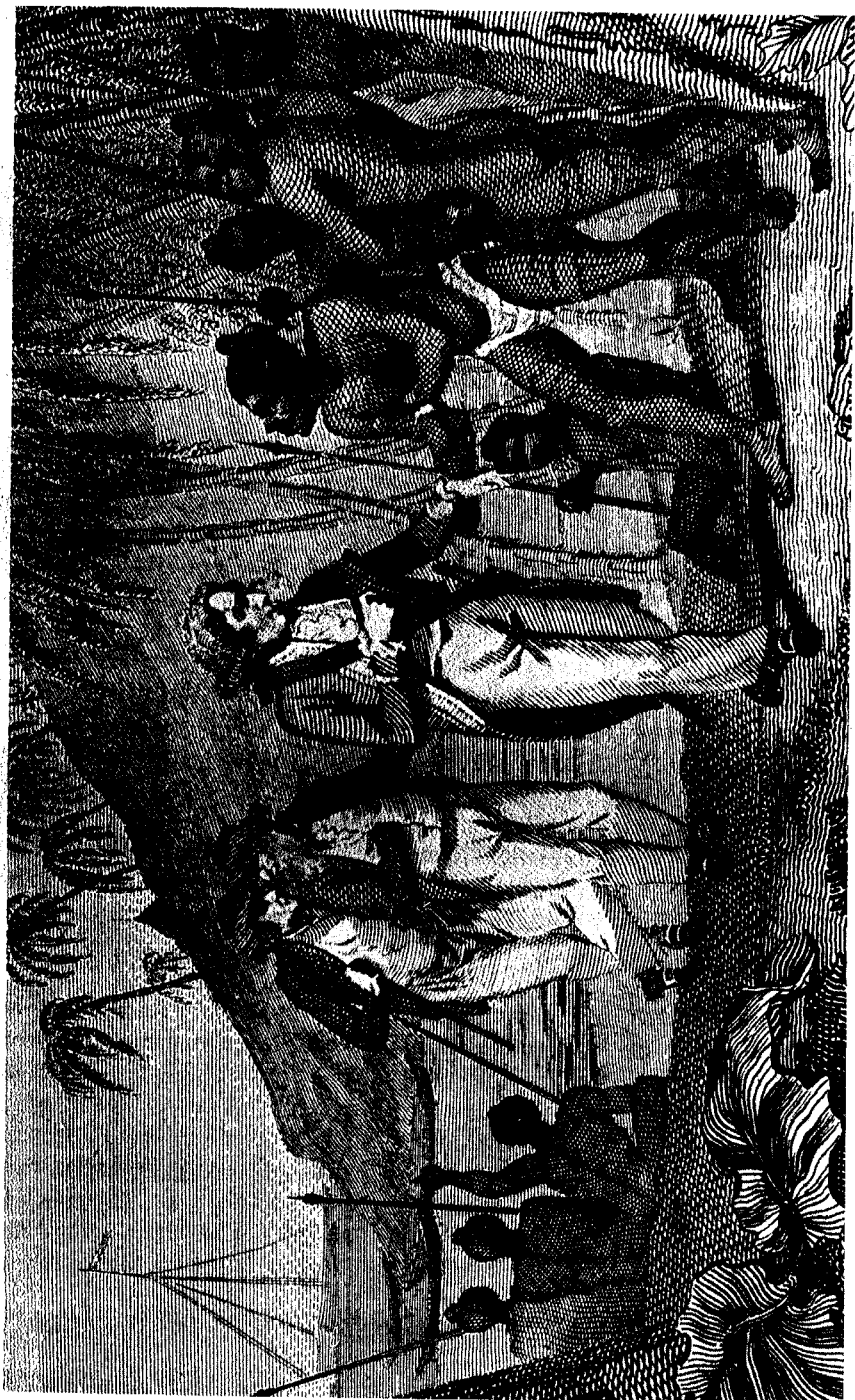
In 1836 another *Mentor* survivor, Horace Holden, published a chilling account of the incident which has enjoyed lasting fame, and which makes Barnard's complementary narrative all the more interesting.

The history of Barnard's account is vague. The manuscript was refined before Barnard's death in 1844, but apparently was never published. In recent years it became part of the Kendall Whaling Museum collection, where, misfiled, it snoozed until accidentally rediscovered in 1979. Its readability, descriptive detail and insider's view of Palau's political machinations more than justify its publication.

The manuscript is presented here almost exactly as Barnard wrote it. Words he omitted or misspelled into unrecognizability have been inserted in brackets. Barnard's stylistic quirks have been corrected only when they might confuse, as when he uses 'than' for 'then,' or 'heave' for 'have.'

The narrative is an outstanding example of the literary by-products of American whaling. It dramatizes that expanding industry's impact upon the people and resources of the nineteenth century Pacific and hints at similar whaling accounts which may still await rediscovery. The whaling trade, relying upon a rapid labor turnover, attracted countless youngsters whose idle periods — and tribulations — at sea generated a rich body of amateur literature. In any case, Barnard's work is a valuable addition to the known accounts of early Palau, islands which before the *Mentor* disaster were regarded as an idyllic paradise by distant Yankees and Europeans.

\* \* \*



In this romanticized view, Palauans honor Captain Wilson. From a 1788 popularization of the *Antelope's* story. Private Collection.

*An Account of the Pelew Islands Situated in the Western Part of the Pacific Ocean Composed from the Journals and Communications of Captain Henry Wilson, and Some of his Officers, who, in August 1783, were there Shipwrecked, in the Antelope, a Packet belonging to the East India Company.*<sup>1</sup>

George Keate's handsome book, published in London in 1788, made Europeans and Americans idealize Palau. Keate's was the first serious account of those islands, and was immensely popular, offering armchair travelers a look at a vital, exotic culture. Based upon primary sources, the *Account* bore none of the stigma which was then attached to fiction, so its exciting story of shipwreck, island life, and safe return had instant respectability.<sup>2</sup>

Keate's *Account* proved timely and influential in a political sense also. It described Palauans as a warm-hearted, forthright island people, unsurpassed in charity and wisdom, who had welcomed the *Antelope* castaways into their midst and unselfishly assisted their departure. To Europeans and Americans grappling with emergent democracy and struggling to define the "nature of man," Palauans seemed exemplary evidence of the purity of man's soul in a state of nature:

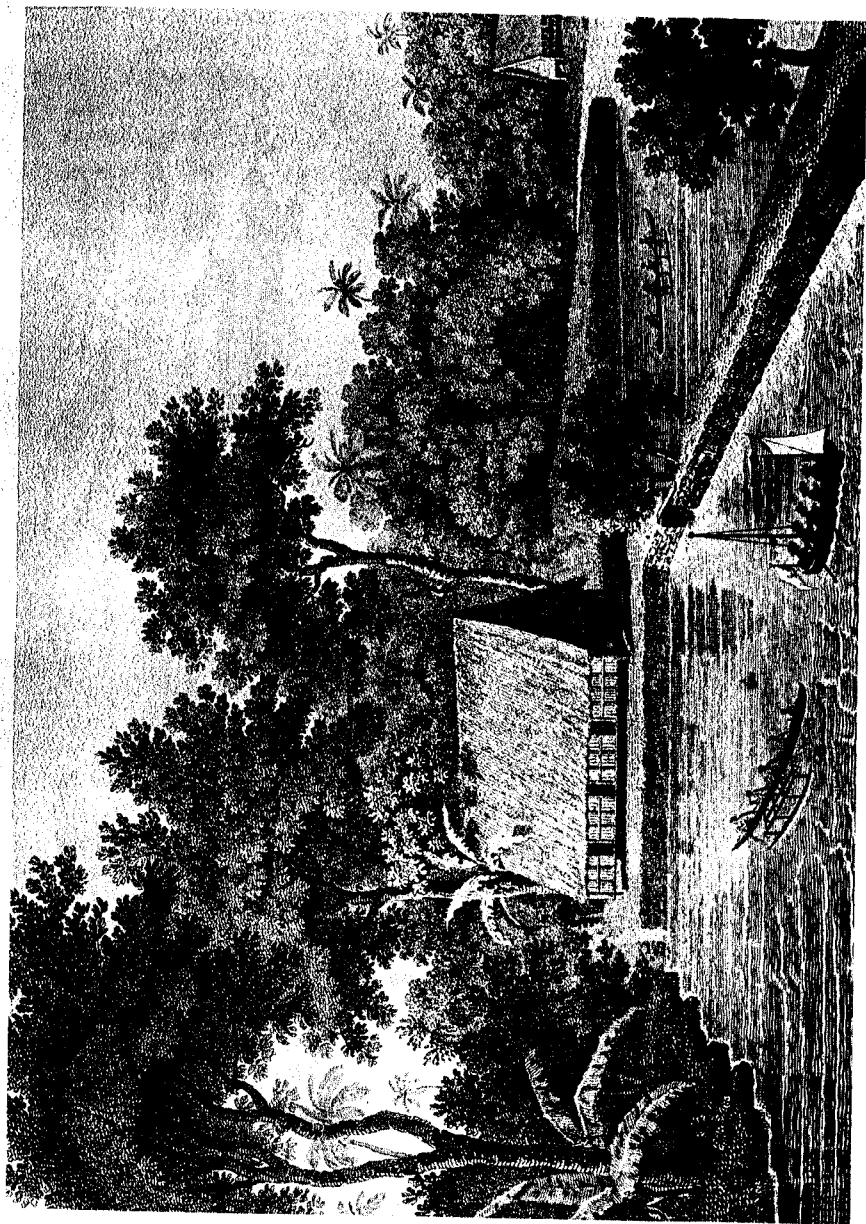
Separated as they were from the rest of the world, the character of a stranger had never entered their imagination. — They felt our people were distressed, and in consequence wished they should share whatever they had to give. . . it was the pure emotions of man to man. — It was a scene that pictured human nature in triumphant colouring — And, whilst their *liberality* gratified the sense, their *virtue* struck the heart!<sup>3</sup>

Palau's example was good news to the swelling ranks of Western democrats; accordingly, Keate's book was an international hit. (The French edition, published on the eve of revolution, is said to have been translated by no less an incipient democrat than Count Mirabeau.)<sup>4</sup>

The *Antelope* incident, meanwhile, was retold repeatedly in a series of reprints, condensations, and revisions.<sup>5</sup> Readers lacking the price of Keate's elaborate volume could buy inexpensive chapbooks based upon it, and likewise be assured of Palau's utopia:

Human nature here shone in most amiable colours; men appeared as brethren; uninformed and unenlightened, they grasped at nothing more than competency and health; linked together as in one common cause, they mutually supported each other; courteous, affable, gentle and humane, their little state was cemented in bonds of harmony. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Over the years, readers with no more than sixpence could obtain a brief glimpse of the people of "Pelew."<sup>7</sup> The *Antelope* story soon took its place in popular anthologies of maritime disasters.<sup>8</sup> Famous also was the touching tale of the young Palauan Lee Boo (son of Ibedul, high chief of



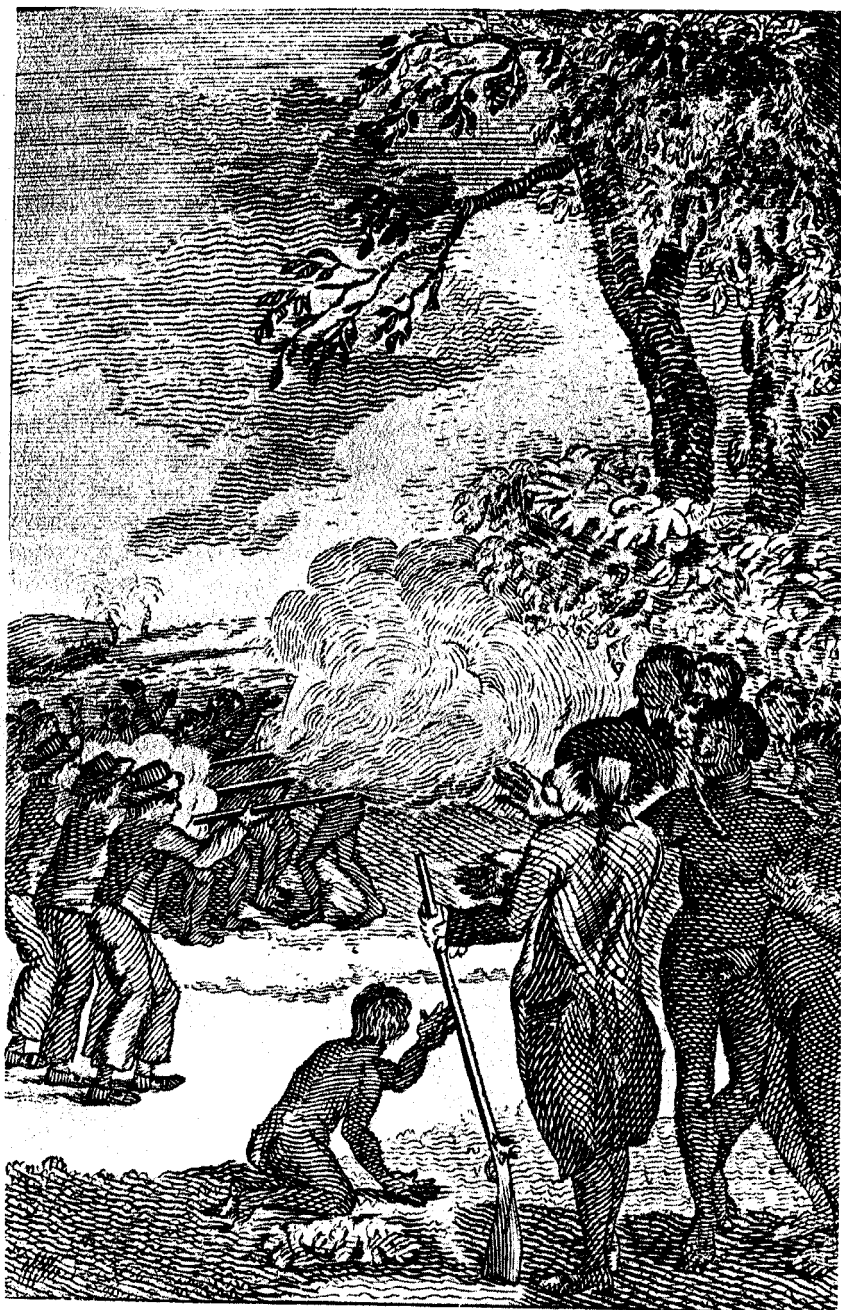
British and American visitors were invariably impressed by Palauan buildings and stone piers. A view from Keate. Private Collection.

Koror) who had accompanied the *Antelope's* Captain Wilson back to Britain, only to die of small pox.<sup>9</sup> Edition after edition, the message was instructive: "the English never saw any thing which had the appearance of contest or passion; every one seemed to attend to his own concerns, without interfering with the business of his neighbor; herein giving an example which ought to put the blush to the boasted philosophy of Europe. . . ."<sup>10</sup> And since the message was underpinned by an exotic non-fiction adventure, the "Pelew Islands" became a ubiquitous fixture of popular reading.<sup>11</sup> Thus did the American and European public maintain a long-term romanticization of idyllic "Pelew" and its people; stories such as the *Antelope's* were the stuff that lured many a young landlubber to sea.

By the early nineteenth century, those islands were among the most celebrated and least understood in Oceania. The *Antelope* castaways had developed a close relationship with Abba Thule (Ibedul), whose wisdom and orderly statecraft were apparent. Admirable also was the vital art and impressive architecture of Koror, examples of which illustrated Keate's famous book. Less obvious to the castaways was Palau's complex social system of ranks and competition, by which individuals and clans vied for status.<sup>12</sup> That system found its supreme expression in ritualized warfare.<sup>13</sup> Palauan society was hardly the simple, spontaneous state imagined by Keate from the *Antelope* reports.

How these complexities had escaped Palau's early Western visitors is hard to explain. In their three month stay in the islands, during which, helped by Ibedul's subjects, they built a boat for their departure, the men of the *Antelope* had been drawn dramatically into Koror's battles with her adjacent rivals. British firepower had won supremacy for Ibedul; small wonder the militant people of Koror took pains to please these obliging strangers. While it is certain that Captain Wilson, Ibedul and their respective subordinates enjoyed cordial, responsible relations, Wilson seems to have misunderstood the importance of British guns to this cordiality. Moreover, Palau's balance of power, of which Koror and Ibedul were but a part, seems also to have escaped him. The *Antelope* incident tipped that balance in Koror's favor. And when the grateful British departed, it was with a promise to further repay Koror's hospitality with more weapons. Thenceforward, even as the concept of Palau as a Noble Savage paradise grew in the West, the islands' internal relations would revolve around the infusion of Western firearms. Fifty years after the *Antelope* incident, Captain Barnard and his crew would be drawn into this escalated power struggle.

Wilson had left behind a store of weapons and a crewmember who had volunteered to guide Koror in their use.<sup>14</sup> More arms, along with live-stock courtesy of the East India Company, arrived in 1791. Amasa Delano, a young American member of that expedition, had read Keate's



The escalation of Palauan warfare: the British introduce firearms in 1783. From *The History of Prince Lee Boo* (1802). Private Collection.

account, and was appalled by the pernicious effect of British arms on Palau when he returned in 1793:

These [weapons] . . . had done them incalculable mischief. The change in their condition was melancholy indeed, when we visited them again. The good king Abba Thule had died, and with him had passed away that valuable influence which was exerted over the whole character of the people . . .<sup>15</sup>

Delano believed that firearms had reduced the people of Koror from virtue to savagery.<sup>16</sup>

Far from conventional whaling grounds and traffic routes, Palau was seldom visited, but occasional contacts between outsiders and Koror resulted in more gun traffic; as when Samuel Snook called in 1798:

"The people were happy to see me . . .; but liked the presents better, I believe, as they consisted of arms and ammunition. The man, whom McClure shot in the arm for stealing, is Abba Thule now! The place is somewhat better than it was formerly, but not much. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

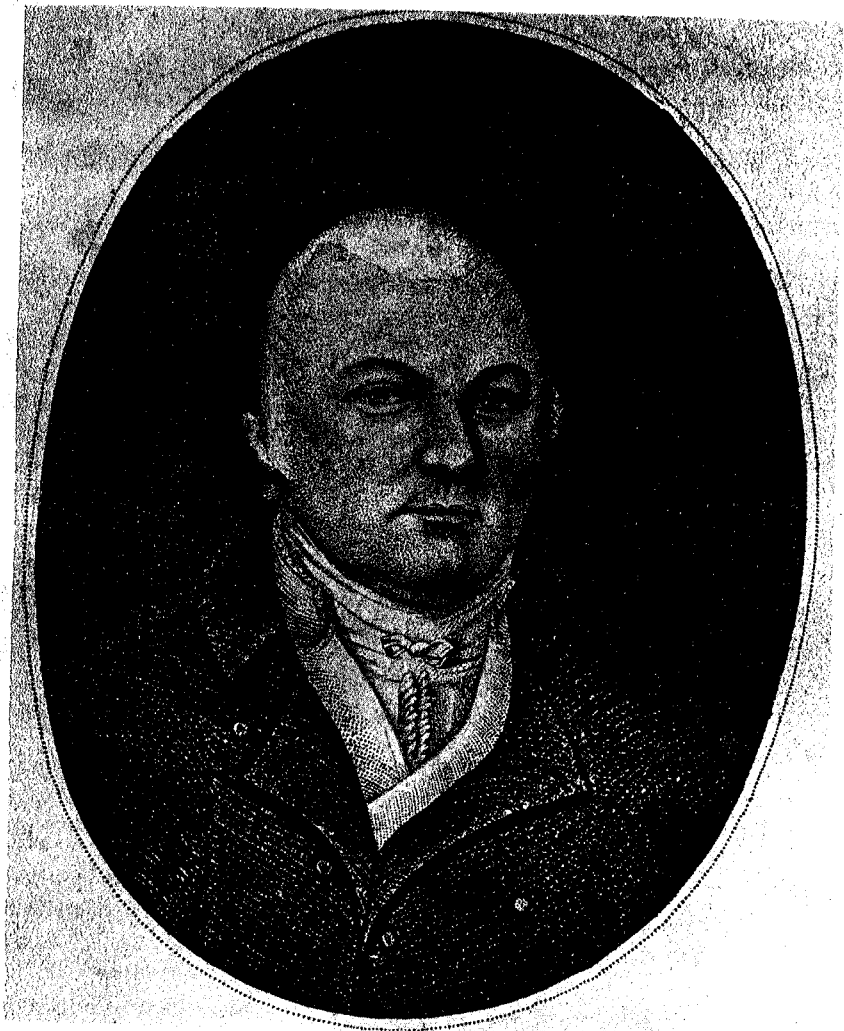
If the British East India Company had further commercial designs on Palau, nothing ever came of them; and in succeeding years the islands relapsed into their pre-*Antelope* obscurity from Western view. Their literary celebrity continued, however; and some ships' libraries included an account of "Pelew."<sup>18</sup> Occasionally a vessel would touch there and trade, and now and then a crewmember would jump ship.<sup>19</sup> British arms had earned white men a sort of mystique in Palau, although the word 'Inglees' was a hated one among Koror's rivals. Spreading commercialization of the Pacific in the early nineteenth century largely bypassed Palau.

\* \* \*

Enter Captain Edward C. Barnard, who played a small part in the Pacific's commercialization, and whose shipwreck at Palau would provide a fascinating contrast to Captain Wilson's.

A Nantucketer, Edward Barnard was born in 1799 into a whaling community which in his early years was onto hard times. As a youngster he saw the whaling business pick up dramatically after the War of 1812, and like so many Nantucketers he made it his career.

Barnard probably first went whaling in his mid-teens, as was customary to accumulate the experience necessary for a captaincy. Part of his early career is known. In June 1821 he shipped on board the ship *Columbus* of Fairhaven, bound for the Pacific for sperm whales.<sup>20</sup> Records describe him as standing five feet seven, with fair skin and brown hair.<sup>21</sup> The *Columbus* whaled the Pacific, returning after two years.<sup>22</sup> Barnard sailed again on board her, this time for a South Atlantic right whaling voyage which lasted ten months, ending in May 1824.<sup>23</sup> In



Amasa Delano, a famous navigator and seal hunter, visited Palau in the early 1790's, and was appalled by the effects firearms had had upon the region.



July 1824 Barnard shipped again, probably as mate, on board the New Bedford ship *George and Martha*, which made a thirty-one month voyage to the South Atlantic and possibly the Indian Ocean.<sup>24</sup>

In five years of whaling, Barnard had spent only two and one half months ashore. After returning with the *George and Martha*, he settled down, whalerman fashion, marrying Phebe Meader of Nantucket and residing in New Bedford, where at the tender age of twenty-five he made captain.<sup>25</sup> His first ship was the *Persia*, which he took to the Pacific for sperm whales, although illness interrupted his command and he was left to convalesce at Honolulu.<sup>26</sup>

Barnard's second command, in 1830, was the New Bedford ship *Mentor*, a small vessel built in 1812 as a merchantman and just refitted for whaling by her sole owner, William Rodman.<sup>27</sup> The *Mentor* made a one-year cruise to the South Atlantic, presumably for right whales.<sup>28</sup> She was back in June 1831, and was hastily refitted for another voyage under Barnard, which would end in shipwreck at Palau.

Until his shipwreck, there was nothing especially noteworthy about Barnard's career. His professional advancement was typical. His fortunes as a whalerman were not spectacular (the first *Mentor* voyage netted him \$824.09).<sup>29</sup> He was an accomplished Pacific hand and a cautious sailor.<sup>30</sup> Misfortune, not carelessness, would cast him upon Palau, test him, and bring him fleeting fame.

The *Mentor's* departure was inconspicuous; she was one of more than 180 whalers which cleared Yankee ports in 1831.<sup>31</sup> Small and with a light crew, the *Mentor* could lower only three six man whaleboats, one of which was headed by the skipper himself. At thirty-one, Barnard — "the old man" — was not the oldest whalerman on board, but he may have seemed so among crewmembers whose average age was about twenty-two.<sup>32</sup> The crew was characteristic of whalers: an assortment of experienced Yankees (natives of whaling towns), immigrants and green youngsters. Might any of these have been lured to New Bedford by the romance of such stories as the *Antelope's*? Whatever the case, one "greenie," Horace Holden, would write a bitter South Sea classic about the forthcoming *Mentor* disaster.<sup>33</sup>

As for the old man, he was well-acquainted with the *Antelope* incident. He also knew of a disturbing, bloody Palauan attack upon the whaleship *Syren* off Angaur in 1823.<sup>34</sup> Soon, aground at Palau with a disoriented crew, Barnard would be confounded by that contradictory knowledge.



An early nineteenth century whaleman's view of his trade.