BELIEFS AND VALUES

The Colonial *Mastas*

The Australians in Papua and New Guinea

HANK NELSON

The Germans in New Guinea

STEWART FIRTH

Double Dutch and Indons

PETER HASTINGS

The British in Fiji

DERYCK SCARR

The French in New Caledonia

LINDA LATHAM

The Japanese 1942-1945: a note on the scale of the dying

HANK NELSON
THE COLONIAL MASTAS

In just over a decade the political map of Melanesia has been transformed. In 1969 President Suharto declared West Irian to be a province of Indonesia, and in 1973 its name was changed to Irian Jaya. At the other end of the Melanesian chain Fiji became an independent nation in 1970. Papua New Guinea in 1975, the Solomons in 1978 and Vanuatu in 1980 went through the same fundamental constitutional change, the final national rite of passage. The formal political power of the masta had ended in most of Melanesia. Within the previous century Melanesian had experienced many varieties of colonial rule: Dutch, German, Japanese, Australian, British, and French. In addition they had met thousands of Americans during the war, and the Indonesians now possess western New Guinea. It therefore seems opportune to attempt to assess Melanesia's many varieties of masta.

In this group of papers the writers are attempting to isolate what was distinctive in the aims and attitudes of the different metropolitan powers. A more complex question is to what extent have Melanesians taken over the specific styles, methods and purposes of their one-time rulers. A start in finding an answer could be made by talking to the people living in the villages near the coast west of Vanimo in the West Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. Their first masta were German, but Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea was their closest town where they could trade, and some found work there. They were inhabitants of an Australian mandated territory from 1914 until the Japanese arrived in 1942. After the American landings at Altaupe and Hollandia in 1944 black soldiers worked a sawmill in the area, and Australians recommenced patrolling. In the postwar the villagers have seen Hollandia become Kota Baru, then Sukarnopura and now Jayapura, and they have met the Indonesians as rulers of the area beyond the 141 meridian. In this serial of colonial confusion did the villagers perceive national differences? And did the differences matter to them? But the following papers are not concerned with the perceptions of the villagers, they present variations in the styles and policies of the masta.
On Empire Day 1937 His Honour, Judge Beaumont Phillips, visited the Rabaul Public School. Before the assembled school he presented badges to four boys recently enrolled as scouts, and asked all to remember that they were British. 'The Empire', he said, 'stood for justice, a square deal and playing the game'. The junior choir sang 'Golden Wattle', the seniors sang 'Australia', and all joined in 'Rule Britannia' (Rabaul Times 28 May 1937). It was a fine combination of British and Australian sentiment: the wattle and the British fleet were important in the minds of the mastas, and both were irrelevant to Simpson Harbour. No Chinese attended the Rabaul Public School although some students had now passed from St Teresa's Yang Ching School and the Overseas Chinese School to private schools in Australia (Cahill 1972:110). It went almost without saying that no New Guineans were at the school; and later His Honour would make a point of visiting the main government and mission 'native schools' at Malaguna, Vunapope and Vunairima. They might be separate and unequal, but they would receive a public gesture towards that 'square deal'.

Four days after Empire Day, on Friday 28 May the citizens of Rabaul noticed a succession of earth tremors. Old hands told startled newcomers that there was no need for alarm; Rabaul often trembled and heaved (McCarthy 1963:172). There were still the attractions of the weekend to look forward to: the Rabaul Club or the less exclusive New Guinea Club; the three hotels, the Rabaul, the Pacific and the Cosmopolitan; or a run down the coast to the Kokopo with its swimming baths, tennis courts, billiard room and dance floor; the sporting teams with their names reflecting the dominant interests – Administration, BPs, Carpenters and Commerce; and the talkies at the Regent where Herbert Marshall and Jean Arthur were to star in 'Birds in the Spring'. ('He gave up a million for her! She gave up a park bench for him!') But the tremors continued into Saturday, coming with such consistency that only two or three minutes separated the shuddering waves. A couple of houses slumped from their concrete posts; cracks opened in the Matupit road; dead fish floated to the surface of Simpson Harbour; and a few people took launches out to Vulcan Island to look at two small islands emerging from boiling sea. At four-thirty Vulcan exploded with a continuous roar and intermittent explosions that reverberated around the hills. People rushed to the harbour to find out what had happened, then fled as the southeast trades brought billowing volcanic smoke across the capital. Confused crowds caught in black clouds on the Nordup road panicked, then found their desperation ease as there was no heat and visibility gradually returned. A few residents spent an eerie night in the town. Vulcan roared, a rain of
fine pumice dust covered everything, and crazy lightning from an intense electrical storm lit the smoke clouds and gave momentary pictures of the absurd; Rabaul looked as though it was snow covered. Occasionally a large tree crashed under the weight of the grey pumice (Rabaul Times 4 June 1937).

On Sunday morning the Administration ordered the evacuation of the town, and just after midday Matupit, on the other arm of the harbour, exploded with another shower of pumice and mud. About 700 whites, 1,000 Asians and 5,000 New Guineans escaped from the town area, most being picked up at Nordup and being carried by boat to Kokopo. A Chinese trader, two Europeans and 438 New Guineans, nearly all from the villages of Valaur, Tavaua, Letlet and Rapolla, died (New Guinea Handbook 1937: Supplement). A special edition of the Rabaul Times was printed on the mission duplicator at Vunakanu. It reported: 'Rabaul, the Garden City, has disappeared and there only remains an ugly mud-covered town' (4 June 1937). The refugees looking across Blanche Bay at the piling clouds above Rabaul and repeating the rumours of charcoal ruins were in fact witnessing the end of a way of life rather than the destruction of a town.

From 10 June, the residents of Rabaul were allowed back to help the few government officers and New Guineans already at work clearing a million tons of ash and mud from the area. But they went back without confidence. The magnitude of the disaster did not disturb the whites. Most in fact spoke in relief and self-congratulations of their escape. One wrote, 'We have to be thankful that the 2 eruptions did not kill people' (Hoogerwerff 8 June 1939). It was a brutal and easy linguistic slip: the dead were New Guineans and the mourning was out of sight and mind of the town in the villages close to Vulcan. The white community feared what would happen the next time. The government built stores out of town to feed a sudden exodus, and it advised residents to keep a suitcase and a box of provisions packed at all times. White men checked that their cars had plenty of petrol and would respond quickly to the starter or the crank handle. The crowds at the Regent pictures increased, but all carefully avoided comment on the continuing tremors and the changing colour of Matupit's smoke. People slept in their clothes, their shoes close to the bed, and one resident wrote of his irrational hesitation about taking a bath lest he be caught when least ready to flee (Hoogerwerff 25 July 1937). The Rabaul Times of 5 December carrying the results of the expert vulcanologists' report had record street sales. The Australian government responded to the pessimistic report by directing that the administration headquarters be shifted from Rabaul. The gardens flourished in the top-dressing of volcanic mud, Burns Philp invested in a new store, and the administration lingered during the debate over the site for the new capital, but the old confidence had not returned before Matupit again sent a drift of smoke across the town, and the first Japanese bombs fell in January 1942.

Rabaul was the largest town in a vast area. Truk, 650 miles to the north was bigger, but it was a thousand miles to a greater concentration of white men. The European residents of Rabaul, supported by the planters of the Gazelle Peninsula and New Ireland, had the communal strength to sustain a peculiar way of life. Although founded only thirty years earlier, Rabaul had a much longer history than the rival mainland centres that had grown since the Edie Creek goldrush of 1926: Wau, Bulolo, Salamaua and Lae.
Rabaul no longer held over half the foreign population, but it still set
the standards.

The statistics are readily available to give basic information about
the 3,200 white people of the Mandated Territory (Census of the
Commonwealth 1933). They were an expanding group, their numbers having
doubled in the previous ten years. Half were born in Australia; 703 came
from New South Wales, 385 from Victoria and 331 from Queensland. The
smaller and more distant states were home for very few. Another 626 came
from the British Isles, nearly all from England and Scotland. Although 15
per cent of the white residents were born in Europe outside the British
Isles, the languages of the continent were rarely heard in Rabaul, Wau and
Salamaua: most of the 326 Germans, fifty-seven Dutch and twenty-nine
French lived on the Catholic and Lutheran mission stations. It was still
very much a male community. In Rabaul there were three white men for every
two women, and in Gasmata and Talasea it was more like six to one.
Predictably it was a population aged between twenty-five and fifty, with
almost all those between ten and fifteen away at school and those over
sixty having retired to more temperate climates. By religion the mastes
were twice as Catholic, more Lutheran and less Presbyterian than their
Australian counterparts. In spite of the settled appearance of Rabaul they
were transitory. Ten per cent had lived in the Territory for less than a
year, and half had been there under five years. Only three 'non-indigenous
persons' (and they might have been Asians or Polynesians) claimed more than
fifty years' residence.

Five fields dominated employment: mining, plantations, the church,
state and commerce. Goldminers were now more numerous than planters,
missionaries outnumbered public servants; but the largest single category
was 'wives without gainful occupation' at 597. The twenty-nine aircraft
mechanics and fifteen pilots were indicators of the growing importance of
aviation. The white workers were, by Australian standards, much less
likely to be unemployed, and more likely to be higher paid. Where in
Australia only 13 per cent of breadwinners were being paid over £260 a
year, nearly half of the Territory's white residents earned more. The
salaries of first division public servants ranged from departmental
directors on £1250 a year to District Officers with starting salaries of £618; 1 labour
overseers and storemen were paid at least £336; and the
lowest were the junior female typists on £156 a year (New Guinea Handbook
1937: 270-272). The Territory sustained its relative wealth in spite of the
missionaries on token incomes and the planters still struggling to survive
the collapsed copra market. The fact that the plantation owners were less
numerous than the managers indicates that many of them had failed to retain
their leases through the depression. The Australian planter was now more
likely to be an employee of a trading company than a proprietor.

In one other striking way the white community of the Territory
differed from the general Australian population; they were much more
likely to be ex-servicemen. Nearly 500 of them had served abroad with the
Australian forces in 1914-18. When the administration, the business houses
and the Expropriation Board sale of plantation leases had given preference
to ex-servicemen, they had helped make Rabaul 'a suburb of Anzac'. Its
section of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia
(RSL) was granted the status of 'State Branch'.

Still concerned about egalitarianism and individual rights in their relationships with each other, the Australians in New Guinea were also prickly about their pay and precedence in the public service, commerce, and the plantation community. They looked for an orderly society of firm, just mastas who invested, gave orders, and solved problems. Below them were the Chinese and mixed race peoples who were keepers of small trade stores, craftsmen and overseers. The New Guineans were the mass to labour and be civilized: they were to be both servants and beneficiaries. Rabaul's three gaols, three hospitals, three cemeteries, three sets of schools and three government wage levels were all evidence of the tiers of a caste society. But the order was continually being disturbed. The Japanese dead were classified as white; the Chinese were becoming richer and presuming to sit in the dress circle of the Regent Theatre; a visiting ship put down only one gangway forcing all passengers to jostle together; New Guineans were buying trucks; and always there were complaints that efficient, respectful servants were hard to find. The whites constantly reminded each other to be tough and just: 'Never make a threat if you are not prepared to carry it out'. 'There is only one thing to do with a flash coon - thump him!' Labour lines supposed to be controlled by the word of the stern, aloof overseer, ran on the fear and the fact of violence. But it was on the plantations that the ideal most frequently went awry. Ex-servicemen had expected to move into wide-verandahed homes giving views across the palm crowns to a distant lagoon and reef; to be attended by servants who were grateful for their improved health care, food and access to material goods; and to have a steady income allowing them to take regular leave 'down south'. In fact those that stayed were in debt to trading companies, they suffered periodic bouts of malaria, their labourers were often defiant and surly, they believed that the government harassed them over petty regulations, and they were unable to rationalize a defence of their colleagues who were so often fined and occasionally gaoléd for savage bashings of labourers. The mastas could make the New Guinean diffident and shuffling; they could refuse to shake his hand or thank him; but they could rarely make him quick and grateful. For the Australian who wanted to be liked, who wanted to be able to joke with his labourers, who detested the role of aloof, colonial mastas, the situation was as disturbing as it was for the bol who was one moment engaged in banter and the next was the target of a boot or torrent of abuse.

Most of the white community laughed at projects to educate New Guineans. They were genuinely surprised when the Rabaul police band learnt to use their instruments. The missionaries were marginally more enlightened: they set modest goals for their students, and the labourer on a mission plantation was not always able to evade corporal punishment. When the Lutheran mission criticized Australian policy or behaviour, it was seen as an attack by 'Germans' and not by 'Christians'. In general all of the mission societies except the Methodists operated as separate nodes of influence, cut off by nationality and style from the Australian planters, miners and government officers. Inevitably some mastas, especially those isolated for long periods on mining camps and patrols, formed close relationships with particular New Guineans. The affection, even admiration, that some white men expressed for individual New Guineans, did little to soften the caste rules that applied in Rabaul.
Fear of sudden volcanic explosion was only one source of the unease in the Mandated Territory's European community. In twenty years of Australian rule New Guineans had killed twenty white people. The dramatic and well-publicized deaths were frequent enough to convince lonely government officers, prospectors, recruiters and urban housewives that their fears were not irrational. In towns the periodic scares over rape were excited by virtually no actual cases of black men criminally assaulting white women. The hysterical reaction of so many of the white community in 1929 when the black labourers of Rabaul went on strike was in part the response of a group keenly conscious that it was an unloved, envied minority living on the edge of a land and of a people; and they understood little of either.

The Australians' unease sprang too from the feeling that they were but temporary masters. However stridently they might claim their sovereignty and that 60,000 Australians had died in the Great War to secure their control, they held the Territory under Mandate from the League of Nations. It was a 'sacred trust'. New Guinea was not quite part of Australia, nor of the British Empire. The Australians in the Territory feared that their interests might be sacrificed to appease a resurgent Germany; and while southern Australia might have been shocked in 1942 at the sudden thrust of the Japanese, those in the Territory were not. They had often talked of the growing power of the covetous Japanese. As the Rabaul Times reminded its readers on 20 August 1937: 'Japan has been steadily preparing for The Day ....' The Australians in Rabaul saw themselves as manning a vulnerable outpost, but they could not arouse other Australians either to honour them or sustain them.

The white residents of Papua were less numerous, poorer, more sober, and more firmly tied to Australia. The total of only 1,400 in 1937 had increased slowly to regain its pre-depression level. As in New Guinea over half were born in Australia; but unlike New Guinea where so many came from New South Wales, the birth place of Papuan whites coincided with proximity: Queensland, then New South Wales and Victoria. Papua was more clearly a northern frontier, and less a foreign land served by the port of Sydney. There were only 100 continental Europeans, half of them French, and nearly all isolated on the Sacred Heart mission stations on Yule Island and its hinterland. The most numerous of the non-white foreign peoples were the 'Polynesians', and except for their special role in the Protestant churches they were too few and too scattered to become an 'intermediate race'. Even the mixed race community, officially counted at only thirty-eight in Port Moresby and 212 in the whole Territory, was small (Census of the Commonwealth 1933). While to 1914 white men had infrequently registered marriages to Papuan women, now they did not. The foreigners of Papua were essentially British-Australian, and distinct.

Consistent with an older community, the Papuan whites were more widely distributed through the ages, the sexes were nearly equal in numbers, and although they were less likely to be recent arrivals, a quarter had been in the Territory for less than five years. Nearly half of them lived in Port Moresby, and another quarter in Samarai. The rest, scattered through mission stations, government posts and plantations, were almost entirely on the coast. Kokoda was the only permanent government station beyond the coastal plain. The whites knew each other. One old resident recalled that a group of them on the government boat could claim that between them they
knew every European in the Territory. The sons of early government officers were moving into positions of importance in the public service, and children that had grown up in the Territory were linking the older families in marriage.

They were less wealthy than the whites of the Mandated Territory. The total copra sales brought in only £90,000 in 1937-38, about one tenth of that of New Guinea (Amalgamation Report 1937:10). If the two or three largest copra plantations, the Sogeri rubber and the Misima goldmine were excepted, there was not much cash being generated to share among the fifty miners and 150 planters. While the Papuan planter was more likely to still own his lease, he was also more likely to be a battler, surviving by recruiting and trading to supplement the income from his few neglected palms. Even the members of the small public service of only 140 were paid less well than their counterparts in New Guinea. The resident magistrates, the equivalents of the New Guinea district officers, received £100 a year less, met their own medical expenses, paid more for worse houses, and did not even get the New Guinea boot allowance for foot patrols.

Port Moresby with its corrugated iron roofs, dusty streets, verandahed houses on high stumps, and a few struggling gardens among stretches of bare earth, looked like many other north Queensland settlements set above a wharf and a sparkling harbour. After fifty years as the seat of government Port Moresby still contained no significant public building or monument. Less troubled than the citizens of Rabaul, the white residents were still uncertain of their identity. Were they pioneers pushing Australian control further north? Were they laying the foundations for another Australian state? Or were they 'overseas', the representatives of the British in another outpost of empire? The name that some briefly attempted to impose on themselves, the 'Anglo-Papuans', had indicated a British rather than an Australian loyalty. But for now, and the foreseeable future, they were clearly resident in an Australian territory. The intense feuds among government officers, and the bitter public squabbles between officers and settlers that had divided Port Moresby for twenty years were dormant. When the Governor-General of Australia, Lord Gowrie, arrived in July 1937 the community united in self-congratulations. Sir Hubert Murray, now thirty years in office, was lauded by planters and traders; he had become an institution. His stature as a great Australian and his acceptance overseas as a progressive administrator were taken as something reflecting credit on all the whites in Papua. It was a planter and an old enemy of Murray, Arthur Jewell, who told Lord Gowrie that the Territory's 'one great achievement' was its 'native administration' (Papuan Courier, 30 July 1937). The irony was that the Papuan whites had come to share Murray's praise when his achievements were in decline. His determination to protect Papuans against brutality and blatant economic exploitation, to give them access to the courts, and to allow them modest opportunities to earn cash had been worthy aims twenty years earlier. Now his government looked benevolent but negative, and the Papuans, bound by petty discrimination, were offered little hope of change.

In both territories in 1937 humane and sensitive men deplored the masta-bot relationships, but nowhere were they forcing a fundamental rethinking of government policies. They were the ones most pleased when individual Papuans and New Guineans later excelled in war, and most distressed when villagers suffered through the vagaries of Japanese and
Allied tactics. The better educated young Australians entering the New Guinea field service as a result of the intense competition for jobs in the depression and the new cadet scheme were still a long way from determining policy in Rabaul. In 1939 the Australian government reaffirmed that Papua and New Guinea would continue under their separate administrations; no one seemed worried that the territories were apparently on separate constitutional tracks, one to be associated with Australia and the other to be independent. That was for a future so distant that it was absurd even to speculate about it. Most white residents thought that the few village councils with no greater statutory authority than debating societies were dangerously radical. There was no likelihood of either administration establishing government schools beyond primary level for a small minority. At best the two administrations aimed to do more of what they were already doing. On the frontier of contact that meant that some field officers would continue to do superb work; but villagers in areas that had known fifty years of 'government' would have further decades of dull, intermittent paternalism. The Australians at home were unconcerned about those to whom they handed responsibility for the government of 1,500,000 people. Murray was probably right to stay in office with the private rationalization that his successor, a failed politician or ageing brigadier, would be less concerned about Papuan welfare. Australian rule had reached a point where it was in need of reformation, but there was no indication in the territories or Australia where the ideas or the agents of change could be found. In fact the arc of colonies from Vietnam to Melanesia were on the edge of massive external intervention, and for many the intensity of change would bring incomprehensible turmoil.

REFERENCES


*Papuan Courier, 1937.*

*Rabaul Times, 1937.*


THE GERMANS IN NEW GUINEA

Stewart Firth

Like the Australians after them, the Germans believed that the villagers of New Guinea were inferior human beings, lower on the scale of evolution than Europeans, less intelligent and deserving treatment appropriate for children or even animals. The strength of this belief was illustrated by the German Colonial Exhibition of 1896, which for six months gave curious Germans the opportunity to observe the 'natives' of their colonial empire living in imitation 'native villages' in Berlin parkland and performing at certain hours of the day as if in a circus or zoo. To Kinkin, Takula, Dalanglagur, Tauluna, Tana, To Walut and Taurangin were the seven men from the eastern Gazelle Peninsula who travelled together with the twelve year old boy To Palangat to be the living exhibits from New Guinea at the exhibition. Alongside the villages from Africa they built three houses in the New Britain style, and on the edge of the park pond the village of 'Tarawai' was constructed as an example of the architecture of the mainland coast, complete with a meeting house modelled on those of Mushu Island near Wewak. The New Guineans' job in Berlin began with a bath at 6 am in the common quarters provided for the 'natives', followed by tidying and cleaning duties. Then all 'natives' dispersed to their separate villages to be ready for the public. As the crowds filed past, To Kinkin and his friends sat making feather decorations, weaving nets or paddling on the pond in a canoe. At 10 am a few men returned to barracks for lunch rations, rice and meat or fish, which were then prepared and eaten 'before the eyes of the public'. Noon to 1 pm was feeding-time for the 'natives' at the German Colonial Exhibition. In the afternoon the men from New Britain were supposed to perform the dukduk dances of the Tolai. While in Berlin the 'natives' were taken on sightseeing excursions, to museums, the zoo and theatres, so as to learn lessons of 'respect and subservience to the "clever white man"'. The dimensions of their heads, ears, noses, mouths, lips, shoulders, hips, feet and even middle fingers were scrupulously recorded and listed on comparative tables.¹

The Germans' racial beliefs had formal, legal consequences. 'Natives' were a legal category in the German colonies, made so in New Guinea by a law of 1886 which defined such persons as 'members of the native tribes of the protectorate' and 'members of other coloured tribes'.² All New Guinea villagers in the German possession became 'natives', subject to laws and penalties which did not apply to Europeans. No European, for example, could ever become liable to corporal punishment. The legal distinction between races was extended even to marriage. First outlawed in South-West Africa in 1905 and German East Africa in 1906, marriages between 'natives' and Europeans became illegal in German New Guinea in 1912. Such unions,
said official members of the Government Council, could reduce 'the white to
the status of the natives' and were 'objectionable under all circum-
stances'; it was an issue which concerned not the individual but the
'supremacy of the whole white race'. Racism also created fear. The
Germans' abhorrence of miscegenation was matched by their fear (usually but
not always unreasonable) that New Guinea villagers were waiting for an
opportunity to kill them. A tiny band of white people living close to
hundreds of thousands of blacks, they believed their very survival depended
upon swift and violent retribution for attacks by people they regarded as
savages.

The New Guineans were on the lowest rungs of the ladder of evolution,
according to German ideas of the time, and the Asians had climbed half-way
up. Both Adolph von Hansemann and Albert Hahl, the two men who most
influenced the development of the colony, looked to Southeast Asia for the
salvation of New Guinea. They saw New Guinea as peopled by villagers too
primitive and sparse to transform a wilderness into a lucrative plantation
colony of the German Empire; such a task belonged to the industrious
Asians, the middle-rank races, who were to be encouraged to pour into New
Guinea in a great flood which would sweep the original inhabitants into a
position of utter subservience. But New Guinea did not prove fertile
ground for these ambitious plans.

Compared with other German colonies New Guinea developed slowly. The
European population numbered 271 in 1900, of whom 200 lived in the Bismarck
Archipelago. It doubled by 1907 and again by 1914, but even 1130 Europeans
were said to be too few for such an extensive territory. The Kaiser,
members of the Reichstag, settlers and Hahl himself were all dissatisfied
with the speed of German colonization, and after leaving the colony Hahl
was to reflect bitterly on the unwillingness of investors to put capital
into New Guinea ventures: he had had to 'go and collect the guests ...
before they would believe that a banquet was prepared for them'.

New Guinea lagged behind the African colonies because the Pacific
possessions did not matter to the German government and the Reichstag.
Copra, the main export of the German Pacific, provided less than 8.5 per
cent of Germany's supplies in 1910 and 1911 compared with 48 per cent
imported from British colonies and 40 per cent from the Dutch East Indies.
Politically the South Seas had long since served its purpose: Samoa in the
domestic propaganda for a bigger navy in 1899, New Guinea in Bismarck's
grab for colonies. The German government left New Guinea to the devices of
those trading and plantation companies foolhardy enough to seek profit on
its malarial coasts. Fourteen years of imperialism without rule under the
New Guinea Company were succeeded by fifteen years of skeletal colonial
administration unevenly extending control over the islands and coastal
fringes of the country. Reaching Berlin from his colony of German Samoa in
March 1908, Wilhelm Solf went straight to the Colonial Office, where he
found officials inured with the annual task of ensuring the passage of
colonial budgets through the Reichstag: 'In the forefront of interest are
the African railways', he wrote. 'Then come the African colonies,
South-West Africa in particular. By comparison with the great territories,
the South Seas colonies are in the background and are therefore treated not
inconsiderately but rather as being of no consequence ....' Hahl could
find no considerateness in his treatment by the Reichstag and the Colonial
Office. The Dernburg regime, he complained, was the one which had nothing left for the South Seas.

Yet metropolitan neglect alone does not explain the Germans' relatively slow progress in New Guinea. Melanesia was difficult country for any colonial power. Its very geography was anti-colonial, placing barriers in the way of the Germans at every turn: the high mountains, steep ridges, landslides and volcanic peaks of much of New Britain, New Ireland, Manus and Bougainville, the coastal mountain ranges of the mainland rising to the rugged heights of the Finisterres and Saruwageds in the Huon Peninsula, the mosquito-ridden mangrove and sago-palm swamps of the Sepik and Ramu deltas and almost everywhere the gorges swollen with flooded creeks after heavy rain, the tangle of exposed roots on the floor of lowland tropical forests and the huge trees blotting out sight of the sky. No wonder the Germans liked the atolls, the smaller island groups, the coasts and the eastern Gazelle Peninsula. They had to contend as well with a village population speaking hundreds of languages, living as distinct peoples, and according to experience and predilection treating the Germans as enemies, temporary allies, masters or friends. However the Germans were treated by the villagers in one place, they could be sure of one thing: their reception a few kilometres away might be quite different, and no New Guinean was in a position to take responsibility for that difference. The result was an endless piecemeal conquest undertaken by the Germans and their New Guinean allies of the moment, inching forward on a colonial frontier at a time when German troops in Africa were winning decisive battles against unified populations within a couple of years. The historic diversity of Melanesia, preserved into the colonial era, proved to be its best defence against rapid reduction to European control; that, and the anopheles mosquito, which drove the Germans from their capital at Finschhafen in 1891 and discouraged many an intending settler thereafter.

In the slow advance of the colonial state the Germans’ greatest lack was information about villagers' motives, beliefs and intentions. The district officer greeted by feasting and dancing was likely to believe the celebrations were in his honour and would show his pleasure with a few token gifts. But villagers often expected to be feasted in return, on a scale which repaid the debt they had created, and meant to challenge the Germans to a reciprocal show of generosity or even to shame them. Peace-making between warring communities, attributed by the Germans to the government's stern resolve and use of force, could also arise from decisions made by people who welcomed the message of peace brought by the missionaries or were following pre-Christian custom. At the time of the balim circumcision festival held every ten years or so by the Kawa people and their neighbours along the northern coast of the Huon Gulf, for example, invitations went to all trading partners and a truce in hostilities was called for the entire period of preparation, construction of the initiates' house and feasting.

When the Germans intervened in local wars they relied on villagers to tell them what was happening. The village of Galavit in the inland Baining mountains of the Gazelle Peninsula was attacked and destroyed in February 1913 and a German punitive expedition sent to punish the guilty warriors. The sequence of events was typical of German rule in New Guinea: news of the attack was volunteered by a man called To Magaga, who said he was afraid to return home and provided a plausible account of the identity of
the wrongdoers, their evil deeds and their threats to kill his people; he asked the government to punish his enemies severely and the government obliged. His tale may have been true or false. The truth of this affair and a hundred others like it will never be known, but it is obvious that the Germans' ignorance of local languages, customs and politics left them open to manipulation by ambitious villagers. Except in the longest-settled districts of the colony, where the government had an opportunity of hearing two sides of a dispute, German officials and their police could never be arbiters; they could only be allies, placing their force at the disposal of an apparently wronged New Guinean community. The interpreters were in a key position to determine the outcome of German interventions, for they were the filters through which knowledge of the situation on the non-Pidgin-speaking frontier of control had to pass before it reached the government. In the Galavit case, the German officer in charge of the police thought his interpreters were using their position 'for their own advantage'.

The Germans adopted a colonizing strategy familiar throughout the tropics before the First World War. The government controlled but did not greatly limit the foreign alienation of villagers' land. It regulated the indentured labour system, imposed a head-tax to stimulate the flow of labourers on to the plantations, compelled villagers to build roads and appointed village officials to enforce its commands. Village life was changed but not destroyed. The colonized people of New Guinea did not become a landless proletariat with nothing but their labour to sell for survival, for not enough land was taken. Men and women continued to live from their gardens, supplementing but not replacing subsistence income with the trade-box and the proceeds of cash cropping.

The Germans' aim was a plantation colony but for as long as Albert Hahl was governor planters disagreed with him about the best way of achieving it. The planters, consumed by the desire for immediate profit, wanted unrestricted labour recruiting whatever its demographic consequences. Hahl counselled caution and patience lest the labour supply dry up from over-use. A few reforms were enacted but in the struggle the planters won more than they lost. As Joseph Meek, Sydney manager of Lever Brothers, said in 1916:

> in our experience, the German administration in the islands has always been carried out with the idea of encouraging as many planters as possible to settle under their administration. They went to a great deal of trouble - they understood all about the costs of planting; what labour was available; they did what they could to get labour, facilitating the planter in every way; and they even went to the extent of advising planters just starting out not to pay above a given wage for labour, or else they would spoil the labour market. The administration kept in touch with the planting community around them and always referred to the planters in connexion with any legislation that was about to be initiated.

By 1914 a few old-established firms owned most plantations and had most influence with government: the New Guinea Company, of which Hahl wanted to
be a director as soon as he left the colonial service in that year, Hernsheim and Company and the Hamburgische Sudsee A.C., the successor company to Queen Emma’s.

By the standards of colonies in the Pacific the Germans exacted a high price in human suffering, humiliation and death for their colonization of New Guinea. Among the 26,000 or so indentured labourers employed in German territories in Melanesia between 1887 and 1903 the average annual death rate was estimated by Governor Hahl to be over 28 per cent, whereas a British Colonial Office official could describe as 'ghastly' a figure of 5.28 per cent recorded for Indians in Fiji in 1895. (The Governor of Fiji was warned by London that the emigration of Indians might have to be stopped.) The highest annual mortality rate among Pacific Islanders indentured in Queensland was 14.8 per cent, recorded in 1884, and from 1886 to 1904 it never exceeded 6.2 per cent. The dysentery epidemic on the Lake Kamu goldfield of Papua in 1910 was minor compared with the mass outbreaks of disease on the plantations of Kaiser Wilhelmsland. Only in the condition of Pacific Islanders in Queensland and Fiji in the early 1880s can there be found a contemporary equivalent in British Pacific colonies to the lot of the labourer in New Guinea throughout the greater part of German rule. The Germans shot more people dead in punitive expeditions than did the British or Australians in Papua, they continued to bombard villages from offshore twenty-five years after the practice had ceased in Papua and they probably administered more floggings to labourers than their counterparts in neighbouring colonies.

Yet the contrast can be overdrawn, especially between Germans and Australians. Coming from a country where Europeans were still engaged in killing the Aboriginal population, the Australians who occupied German New Guinea admired the German achievement and adopted the German way of doing things. They first abolished corporal punishment, then quickly restored it after planters protested. 'Whippings ... are effective and do not interfere with the necessary labour of the offender', wrote the Australian military administrator G.J. Johnston in 1919: 'With a native as with an animal - correction must be of a deterrent nature'. And when Johnston looked forward to a 'vital change' in the development of New Guinea during the 1920s, all he meant was a change in the nationality of the colonizers, who were to be Australians rather than Germans. New Guinea was to remain a colony for the white man.

NOTES


2*Nachrichten*, 1886, p.104.

3*Amtsblatt*, 1 November 1912.


8. Prey to Hahl, 8 May 1913, RKA 2995.


11. Johnston to Secretary, Defence Department, 14 March 1919, Ex German New Guinea Miscellaneous Reports, Australian War Memorial Library, Canberra.

12. Johnston to Secretary, Defence Department, 4 March 1919, Ex German New Guinea Miscellaneous Reports, Australian War Memorial Library, Canberra.
DOUBLE DUTCH AND INDONS

Peter Hastings

I sometimes think the differences in style and political perceptions between Dutch and Australian kiahs quite as great as those between Dutch and Indonesian administrators. I have often identified the former in my own mind by comparing a night I spent at the residence of the then District Commissioner, Morobe, glumly counting match boxes, cultural trophies of a world trip, adorning the wall of his bar in an effort to counter the tedium of an all too predictable conversation, and the following night which I spent at the residence of the Resident, West Nieuw-Guinea, at Manokwari. The latter was a concrete brick and timber dwelling, the floors ceramic tiled throughout in Dutch-Indonesian style, giving it an incongruous sense of permanency contrasted with the Australian house on stilts style. Everything was very different - trellised orchids, small fountain, carelessly stacked classical records, more or less current issues of English, French, Dutch and German magazines. The Resident's wife was certainly very different. She was Indonesian.

It was not, perhaps, so surprising on reflection. Three of the Residents (I am talking of the late 1950s) and a number of the most senior administration officers had served in Indonesia before the war, and after it, as youthful trainees and contrôleurs. Some in fact had been interned by the Japanese. All of them secretly hankered for the great islands to the west whose language they knew and whose cultures they valued. Despite all that had happened affection remained. On one occasion, paying farewell respects, I mentioned to the Deputy-Governor, Boendermaker, that I would shortly visit Indonesia. His eyes flew open in surprise. 'Can it be? How lucky you are. If you go to Bali please take a letter to my old friend the Agung Agung'. I did. Boendermaker, like other senior Netherlands officers, represented an important element in the diversity of Dutch attitudes towards the territory. His generation of administrators believed implicitly, I think, that a single act of wise and generous decolonization in Netherlands New Guinea was not only in itself a desirable end but would erase once and for all the Netherland East Indies image of the Dutch as '300 years of the whip and the club'.

It was a motive that the Indonesians subtly intuited and whose realization, for obvious reasons, they could not allow. The second level of the administration comprised officers ten to fifteen years younger. Some of them had served in Indonesia post war. Most had no NEI administrative experience. Quite a number had worked there or had lost a business there, or a job with a Dutch firm, and had joined the Netherlands New Guinea administrative service as a result either because they needed a
job or did not want to return to chilly Holland. Most of them were considerably resentful of Indonesia, like the Commandant of the PVK who had unsuccessfully commanded Ambonese loyalist troops in the police actions of the 1940s. It was this generation, and a younger one, which gave resolve to Dutch efforts to create the 'dynamic few', as the optimistic jargon of the period had it, who were to lead the territory to independence in 1970. The younger generation of kiafs were mostly fresh out of university or technical college, energetic young men who liked the bush, adventure, exotic places and the money. Even among them were some who had been born in Indonesia and had ended up in West New Guinea following the general evacuation of the Dutch in the 1950s. Many of them, like the older generation, were anti-Indonesian but for different reasons. They loved New Guinea and its people even though all but the very naive were increasingly pessimistic about a successful outcome of their labours. All were intensely sceptical of Australia's political support. By 1959 recruiting for the administration, a graduate service, was becoming difficult. Nevertheless despite rapidly increasing uncertainties the Dutch ran not only an efficient administration but one which was a good deal more dedicated than might have been expected. Its most attractive features derived from a combination of Dutch style and the need to make urgent decisions about a wide variety of social, political and economic issues. Most of the Dutch were notably a good deal better educated than the majority of their Australian counterparts. Politically they were a great deal more sophisticated. They had to be in order to force a pace of political development which found no favour in Australian New Guinea. I remember Sir Paul Hasluck shaking his head in mixed disbelief and disapproval when I told him of the lectures being given Papuans in urban centres such as Merauke on subjects like 'Colonialism and the UN' or 'The political development of independent African states'. Most of the kiafs I knew were multilingual graduates in arts or law. It was rare to meet an educated Hollander who did not have English. A number were anthropology graduates who found it more than convenient to work as kiafs on short-term contracts in places like the Baliem, the Ok Sibil and the Asmat - these were still the golden days of first or very recent contact in a large number of places. One Resident was an academic prehistorian while the Government's chief adviser on cultural affairs (Adviseur voor Bevolkingzaken) was the noted anthropologist, and famed 'Jungle Pimpernel' of 1942-44, Victor de Bruyn.

There was a notable absence among the Dutch of any overt racism accompanied by determined efforts, where possible, to force the pace of Melanesian social integration. At a time when native drinking was prohibited in Papua New Guinea it was not uncommon to see the Director of Native Affairs, Velkamp, drinking with Papuan kiafs in the bar of the Noordwijk or to see Papuans drinking at Government House receptions. I think that if I were to search for a single word to describe Dutch attitudes towards the 'Papoeas' at almost all levels it was that of encouragement. In many ways Dutch efforts were massive considering that they started virtually from scratch in 1950. In 1958 when little more than half the territory was under control Papuans occupied about 38 per cent of lowest grade administrative jobs. In 1961 when the administration claimed to control two-thirds of the territory, Papuans occupied 51 per cent of all administrative posts. These were mostly in the lowest echelons but among their number were several HPBs and some twenty patrol officers.
Nevertheless to all of this, including the crash programmes in primary and secondary education, political instruction and job training, there was a desperate, makeshift quality. Over the years Holland had spent very large sums of money (and was due to spend even vaster sums in future years) in building a very effective coastal infrastructure of wharves, towns, roads, airstrips, power generators, cold storage chambers, hospitals and houses, but relatively little on interior development. Hollandia had a surprising network of roads but in 1962, when the Dutch began to leave the territory, there wasn't even a single jeep track in the Baliem. Except for the Kingstrand aluminium huts of the central administration block at Wamena, the strip and some empty paddocks where they had tried breeding cattle, the Dutch left nothing to indicate that they had ever been there. In the end the Netherlands was caught in a situation over which it had increasingly less control, one in which the faster it forced the pace of Papuan decolonization, the more it was forced to spend and the greater became its involvement. That decade led to terrible consequences, as we all know, for perhaps 12,000 urban Papuan labourers, minor to middle-ranking officials, teachers and apprentices of a dozen kinds, who became all too used to living in European houses, buying expensive imported European goods on artificially maintained high wages and who looked to a comfortable subsidized ride to independence. For that generation (of which perhaps 2,000 may have been killed) now in its forties, there was real tragedy in the Dutch departure and in the Indonesian takeover. This, in fact, was no less traumatic for those Irianese, quite large in number, who welcomed incorporation into the Republic for one reason or another.

By the same token it was also traumatic for the incoming Indonesians who had to contend with the effects of ten years of determined Dutch spending which General Nasution aptly described to me as the 'Dutch time bomb'. The one enjoyable irony of the takeover situation nevertheless was to see visible evidence that a decade and more of relentless irredentist propaganda was not proof against rapid Indonesian disenchantment with Irian Jaya's people and rugged terrain. What were they like, those first Indonesian kiape? Those who came in 1963 were mostly nationalistic carpetbaggers, 'Old Order' flotsam and jetsam, in search of subsidized rice rations and hardship salaries.

Nevertheless, there was an immediate and fundamental difference between the aims of an Indonesian administration and those of the Dutch and the Australians. While we and the Dutch were preoccupied with the development of the two New Guineas as eventual autonomous entities, the Indonesians were involved in the administration of a new but permanent part of Indonesia. The years 1963 to 1966 were rather desperate and despite an enormous effort in the field of education the emphasis was, in Dr Subandrio's phrase to me, on 'getting them down out of the trees even if we have to pull them down'. Operasi Koteka had its origins in that phrase and the Indonesians have still to learn that only softlee, softlee catchee monkey. If there is one sight more depressing to an Indonesian than that of the national flag hung upside down from a penis gourd it is a Dani wearing one beneath a tightly buttoned pair of jeans stretched to tearing point.

After 1966 there was considerable improvement in the qualities of the administration although here one has to distinguish between the civil administration and the army. Although administration and policy making
power is legally vested in the Governor and provincial assembly, an advisory group, Muspida, comprising the Panglima, and top local army and police officers is the real decision making body. Muspida can overrule the civilian kiaps right down to village level especially in any matters involving political judgements or activities. The military presence in Irian Jaya is not large, probably not much more than 3,000 to 4,000 altogether - possibly double this number during the Vogelkop Arfak insurrections of the middle 1960s - but in carrying out its divfungsi role its influence is all pervasive. The Indonesian administration can justly claim to have made genuine efforts to reach the whole of the Iriante population, not just the relative handful affected by the Dutch, in education, vocational training and in agricultural cash cropping. It has been at its most successful in education which has been vastly expanded at all levels. One spin off has been the rapid expansion in the use of Indonesian. This has meant that large sections of the population in remote areas like the Eastern Baliem and the Eastern Asmat now have a lingua franca. One of the major objectives of the education programme has been to force the pace of acculturation. Its success depends on one's viewpoint. In mine there has been mixed success. In most of the towns too many Melanesians have been forced into kamponds unable to compete with ubiquitous Buginese in selling fruits and vegetables. It is marginal living. In most towns the Irianese are being rapidly outnumbered by unsponsored migrant arrivals, a situation which creates a good deal of tension. But by the same token Melanesians in a parallel experience are being educated in the main stream of Indonesian social and political values, are competing for jobs and are entering in increasing numbers into Indonesian life. Increasing numbers of students obtain scholarships to Indonesian and foreign institutions and increasing numbers look to preferment within the Indonesian administration structure, not least in the Indonesian armed forces and police. But the pace of Indonesian social and economic acculturation of the Melanesian is very uneven. Attempts to 'civilise' the Dani overnight have been markedly unsuccessful. In towns like Manokwari and Jayapura too many Melanesians are relegated to jobs as garbage collectors and parking police or are being pushed out to fringe kamponds. On the other hand there are several very large scale mixed race agricultural pilot projects like the one at Nabire which are a tribute to Indonesian ingenuity and insight. At Nabire there is a mixed coffee, pepper and cocoa project involving several thousand Melanesians and similar numbers of transmigrasi, mainly Javanese, living and working together in adjacent kamponds. The Bupati (District Commissioner) at Nabire has also managed to do something the Dutch only talked about - that is drive a kiap road from Nabire over the range to Enarotali, a feat comparable with the first jeep track over the Kassam Pass, which will lead sooner or later to opening up the central highlands to vehicular traffic, something which has been desperately needed for a long time.

Finally, a word on Indonesian kiap attitudes. Most of those I have seen at work in Irian Jaya are, I believe, conscientiously concerned with improving the Melanesian's situation, especially in the bush areas. While individuals vary I have noted a good deal of good natured banter between tutelary kiap and unwilling apprentice. There have been major policy mistakes - Operasi Koteka is one - and there have been savage reprisals where the Indonesians, ever paranoid about questions of sovereignty, have confronted anti-government activities, e.g. the Arfak uprisings of the 1960s and the (Free Papua Movement (OPM) activities of the late 1970s. The
Indonesians are determined to make Indonesians out of the Irianese and will try to achieve in Irian Jaya over the next fifty years what it took the Javanese, in a sense, 1,000 years to do in the rest of the archipelago. It will be a painful process, especially in the middle period, but an irreversible one. And if it's any consolation I have seen as many Indonesian *kiaps*, as I have Dutch or Australian, scratch their heads over the unfathomable ways of the Melanesians.
THE BRITISH IN FIJI

Deryck Scarr

If we may believe that Rupert Brooke was an authority on anything besides honey and small corners of the earth that are forever England, then

... The Englishman strikes roots, imagines he's in a story by Kipling, and elects himself perpetual vice-consul .... My country! My country!

He was writing of Levuka, Fiji, the South Seas Islands group where the English have most congregated. Only very rarely, though, did they call themselves Masta there; and then it was on the plantations where, in the thirty-odd years following the establishment of a resident white community some 2,000 strong around the year 1870, they had to communicate in a form of pidgin with labourers imported, in particular from New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands towards the heart of Melanesia.

Among Fijians, Melanesianized Polynesians as the present state of knowledge would seem to indicate, the Englishman – Scotsman, he was quite as likely to be, more rarely Irish or Welsh – was not unhappy to be called Turaga, like a Fijian chief. A chief, say, such as the one who addressed the Defence Club in Suva one evening during 1938, differentiating by country of origin the Europeans whom his people had encountered since whalers came through in the late 1790s – and before whom, it had been confidently expected Fijians would wither away.

If this was not what had happened following Fiji's cession to Britain in 1874 the credit did not lie with rule from London. The Colonial Office expected pretty much a re-enactment of the New Zealand scene: seizure of land, suppression of culture in the name of 'uplifting' and assimilation. Chance prevented this in Fiji. Chance brought there in 1865 a London-born seaman, more recently shipwrecked botanical collector, who almost succeeded in making Fiji viable long-term as an independent kingdom under the assembled Turaga presided over by the Vunivalu of Bau as Tui Viti; and chance saw arrive, again, as first resident Governor, the Scottish aristocrat Arthur Hamilton Gordon, a son of Queen Victoria's Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen, who found all to admire in what J.B. Thurston, the castaway, had done, and nothing admirable in the aspirations of the settlers.

Bankrupt cotton planters, over-extended small merchants, they held that now Fijians were British subjects they must be changed from communal, kin-oriented beings into atomized 'individuals'; not merely enabled to
sell their land and labour as freely as cheaply, but actually forced to do so by pressure from a tax in cash; though not necessarily be allowed to sit in the Legislative Council, and only exceptionally permitted to enter European clubs.

When Governor Sir John Thurston died in harness at the beginning of 1897, the one time castaway had been the single most influential European in Fiji for over thirty years, during which time Fijians had preserved land and society through a produce tax and the semi-autonomous Fijian Administration; while from 1878, as seat of the Western Pacific High Commission, Fiji had exported to the other Islands of the region where no civilized power ruled - as none did in Melanesia, except for the French in New Caledonia - a necessarily watered down version of the policy followed there.

In the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides, this meant the British were averse to encouraging white settlement by registering deeds to land - New Hebrides' land purchases, in particular, were often patently absurd; and it meant refusal to facilitate plantation development by granting licences to recruit labour. If you were British - as most of the few score Europeans at large in central Melanesia were, outside New Caledonia - and you wanted to grow coffee on Efate or deal Melanesia-wide in the staple of the Islands trade like firearms, alcohol, dynamite, you had to do it under the French, American, German, Norwegian, or some other flag of convenience.

Otherwise, you risked interference from a British naval commander operating as a Deputy Commissioner under the Western Pacific Orders in Council, or even from the High Commissioner himself when he visited the Solomons in 1894 to inaugurate the British Protectorate under which these disabilities were to be extended to all foreigners.

New Hebrides ran on in the old vein, until the powers most involved with the group, Britain and France, agreed on joint administration in 1906; and then anarchy was institutionalized there because, with very little interest in New Hebrides at all - the handful of planters and traders who were not French were mostly Australian, as were the noisy Presbyterian missionaries, and the gentlemanly Anglicans of the Melanesian Mission were more concerned with the Solomon Islands - Britain let France get away with a weak, barely existent central administration which left the French Residency free to press its own nationals' considerable, if in equity dubiously based, plantation interests. And anyway, in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, land was being declared waste by a British Resident Commissioner who was all for plantation development, on the assumption Solomon Islanders were a dying race.

There was a harder, more pragmatic edge among the British in Melanesia after the turn of the century. It appeared among officials in Fiji too, from Governor Sir Everard im Thurn downward, in their desire to make Fijian land available for white settlement. The late nineteenth century position was impossible to shake, though, with some 83 per cent of land - not the best land, admittedly - firm in Fijian hands. And some continuing contrast in attitude between the British in Fiji and the powers-that-were, say in Papua, appeared when Lieutenant-Governor Sir Hubert Murray wrote from Port Moresby while planning his White Women's Protection Ordinance, to ask the Fiji Government what exceptional measures its far longer experience had
proved necessary. None, he was told; and could have been told how Sir John Thurston had hauled into court a planter's wife to explain herself after she fired her revolver upon an intruder fleeing from her bedroom.

If you had asked the Fijian who spoke to the Defence Club in 1938, he would have been likely to say European womanhood was too frail and angular to appeal much — though it was understood he had not been unsusceptible up at Oxford, before the Great War carried him away to win the Médaille Militaire in action with the Foreign Legion during the Battle of Champagne in 1915.

Lack of gallantry was not common with this Turaga — Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna, high chief of Bau and Lau, District Commissioner, Member of Legislative Council, Secretary for Fijian Affairs after 1944, Ratu Sir Lala from 1946; but on this occasion, in the Defence Club, when he compared the British with other Europeans, he was not speaking as himself. Inspired, by something racially provocative from a European friend, to tell his white audience what Fijians thought of them, he took on the guise of a qase, an elder, back telling his fellow villagers what he had seen in town — where this humorous old man had concluded you should not be surprised if told Europeans had conquered death.

He knew the different breeds: ruggedly independent Australians, with their thin, shrill, displeasing accents, their free swearing, perpetual hurry after money — they were principally involved with the big trading firms or the Colonial Sugar Refining Company — and their habit of holding aloof from Fijians; the New Zealanders, mostly bank clerks, who aped the Englishman, had made a mess of colonial administration in Western Samoa, and took nothing so seriously as Rugby football; the American, who was either a filmstar or a millionaire; and the British themselves, administrative officers, who had to be looked at through a film of respect because Fiji had been ceded to their country, though in person they were cold and remote; they seemed to like Fijians but, impervious to other's needs, would not dream of giving you ten bob, and however much you admired their shirt would never hand it over.

They were fresh-faced, neatly dressed, never flurried, speaking with an exaggerated drawl. Their professional application was more than adequate, their personal inclination curiously proprietary: 'He picks up our language quickly enough' — says Ratu Sukuna's qase of the typical young British official — 'though he frequently speaks it as if he owned it'.

There were no castaways among British officials by the late 1930s when Ratu Sukuna was mocking them, not castaways in the literal sense anyway. Two generations earlier, former planters had been taken into the Fijian government; in this one, local European families more commonly merged into the Australian-cum-New Zealand business world, when they had no plantations or businesses of their own (and these were likely to be taken over by some Sydney giant, or rely upon an Australasian bank); and though a few European locally-born did rise in the colonial service this century, preference was for just those youngsters Ratu Sukuna described.

They were chosen to fit the mental image of Aucuparius — otherwise Sir Ralph Furse, appointments secretary at the Colonial Office, who felt it appropriate to call himself after this supposed bird-limer in classical
mythology from his task of snaring for the Empire young graduates he called sahtbs; ideally, sahtba with third-class honours.

District Officers in their early twenties, they needed to be all-rounders; witness the official diary of the D.O. Labasa for May 1956. One morning he is haranguing an assembly from the back of a lorry; a whole day is spent in the office 'tying and untying the marital knot'; and another is devoted to:

The Indian Advisory Committee who seem to regard the District Officer as a sort of elevated Government Storekeeper with an unending supply of culverts, road-making equipment, traffic signs and lavatory pedestals. The meeting lasted for eight hours but mercifully the evening fell and we have no lamps.

Kipling apart, there was in Melanesia even into the 1960s something of a Sanders of the River touch about the British role; though the difference in Fiji was that District Officers had no direct authority in the affairs of Fijians themselves; after Ratu Sukuna re-established the Fijian Administration in 1943-44, the provinces were ruled by Fijian Rokos Tu, the districts by Fijian Bulis, Fijian Regulations were applied by Fijian Magistrates.

Not much of this was greatly to the taste of the British, who were at heart for district rule; and just as there was no Thurston to storm at backsliding Fijian officials - their deficiencies could in some degree be traced to lack of experience since his death - so there was no ready return to the nineteenth century's central marketing system for Fijian produce. Not even Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, intimate of Governors, for Fijians their god, could turn back the clock.

The very fact that Melanesia had a 'native' who had gone to Oxford so early as 1913, eaten his dinners at the Middle Temple, and spoke immaculate English, might indicate that the British had dropped their customary reserve. He was the only one, though; local equivalent of how many Indian princes. His namesake and predecessor Ratu Josefa Lalabala, the Tui Cakau, Thurston's adopted son, had not been accepted in many European households when he came back from school in Sydney in 1880. And Ratu Sukuna, thirty years later, owed his higher education to his own people, not the British. He fought in the Foreign Legion because the British Army would not have him.

Anglo-Saxon exclusiveness was manifested at the Suva Grammar School, where Fijians were normally not accepted and only a sprinkling of part-Europeans were allowed entry; in the Levuka Public School, part-Europeans excluded Indians and Chinese. And the British rulers joined hands with locally born Anglo-Saxons to keep it so. That would have been no surprise to Rupert Brooke, poet on his travels in search of the romantic, who found Suva a much civilized place where the rules of etiquette were strictly observed; in the streets and offices, where Fijians, Indians, Europeans moved together without mingling, it was
So queer, seeing the thin, much clothed, ancient, over-civilized, silver bangled, subtle Indians, and these jolly, half-naked, savage children of the earth, working side by side in obedience to the Clifton and Trinity, or Winchester and New College, men, with his 'Doesn't do to be too friendly with these niggahs, you know. You must make 'em respect you'. That is empire.

REFERENCES


Noumea was built by levelling a hill to drain a marsh, a project which took twenty years. The traces of this have disappeared along with the convict camps but the great stone public buildings remain - Government House, the law courts, the infantry barracks, the old military hospital, the artillery barracks, the cathedral. They are signs of a convict past, and an attitude to public spending, unique in the South Pacific.

Another feature of Noumea is that until the nickel boom ten years ago, whole suburbs were unchanged since the 1890s. The era of colonial expansion was the convict period, from the colony's foundation in 1854 until roughly 1900. Governor Feillet's decision in the 1890s to halt transportation and wean the colonists from their dependence on supplying the convict system was premature. The colony stagnated until World War II, with Asian contract labourers merely replacing convict numbers.

This paper examines the colonial masters in New Caledonia's formative period, but also the way in which the convict era gave New Caledonia a different experience from other Melanesian colonies.

THE CONVICT COLONY

Noumea was founded in 1854 and for the next thirty years naval officers governed the colony. Their object was not to conquer the forty to sixty thousand Melanesians but to create a few completely secure areas in which convicts could be introduced as early as possible. Troops were concentrated in Noumea and Canala and the administration's interest in the tribes diminished with their distance from these two points. The half of the main island north of Wagap and Kone was of little interest, the Loyalty Islands still less. Tribes near the convict enclaves of the south felt the full weight of a very large and powerful European presence.

There was a thorough preparatory period before convicts were introduced in 1864, and from 1867 the colony, which numbered two thousand five hundred Europeans in 1864\(^1\) was able to absorb on average one thousand convicts each year. The prison population reached twelve thousand in 1876, then stabilized at this level until the end of transportation in the 1890s. As an indication of the scale of transportation, and the feat of administration it was to feed, house and supervise these numbers, it should be remembered that there were never more than three thousand convicts in Australia at any one time.
In 1877 the total European population was just under seventeen thousand. Nearly three-quarters were convicts, time-expired convicts and political prisoners. Three thousand were military and civil service personnel and their families. Only two thousand seven hundred were colonists. Most prisoners were kept in gaols close to Noumea, only a small proportion being sent to the prison farms of Canala, Bourail, Teremba, Fonwary, Koniambé and Ouedoa. During the 1870s four thousand political prisoners were transported, mainly to the Isle of Pines. Only a few hundred convicts were assigned to the road gangs or to private employers.

Noumea in the 1870s had a non-convict population of four thousand of whom only about one thousand were free civilians, with about eight thousand convicts and political prisoners nearby, supplying the town with labour and controversy.

The 'colonial masters' of New Caledonia were the civil servants and military officers of Noumea. The clergy were the victims of petty bullying by a usually anti-clerical civil service. The free colonists depended for their livelihood on supplying government contracts and this, combined with rigid censorship under the naval governors, kept them in line.

The civil servants and military officers were on two year postings in New Caledonia. Normally the Infanterie de la Marine regiments spent two years in a colony, then two years in France, then on to the next colony. Military and naval officers, and the civil servants not of the penal administration, could expect to meet up again in Indochina, Africa, one of the Caribbean colonies, Reunion or Tahiti. For them reality was their service, the colony a backdrop. Politics in the European community was the politics of the civil service, a vicious struggle between clericalists, who were conservative as well as Catholic, and Freemasons, nominally more liberal.

It is customary to contrast British and French colonial administrations, by saying the British used a few highly paid Europeans and many lowly paid non-Europeans, whereas the French exported an army of badly paid European fonctionnaires. European public servants in New Caledonia were not badly paid to begin with, but had subsidized or free housing, food and medical treatment. If the European bureaucracy was about fifteen hundred and the military establishment - a full regiment, an artillery company, a gendarmerie company and three or four naval vessels - was about the same, there was also a Melanesian police force of one thousand, and three to five hundred Melanesian postmen, sailors, dockers, interpreters and others.

Concentrating the convicts in Noumea simplified security, but it also made life more agreeable for an all-powerful bureaucracy. The only proper road in the colony until the mid 1880s ran down to the picnic spot at Anse Vata. Settlers had difficulty obtaining convicts, but each officer had two or three convict servants.

Spending on public works in Noumea was lavish. Noumea had saltwater distillation plants in the 1860s, water piped by convict-built aqueducts and a secondary school in the 1870s, gaslight in the 1880s, horse-drawn omnibuses in the 1890s and, briefly, a railway. The gracious homes on the
Boulevard Vauban belonged not to merchants, nickel barons or graziers, but to departmental heads. Symbolically the cathedral stands at one end of the Boulevard, the Masonic lodge at the other.

Beyond Noumea the administrative structure in the 1870s and 1880s was a mixture reflecting the varying degrees of interest and control from district to district. At Bourail, Teremba and Canala there were district officers, usually seconded from the regiment. The more settled areas, between Noumea and Teremba, were divided into two gendarmerie districts. Outside these areas, even in mining sites such as Thio and Houailou, NCOs and the Melanesian police provided what contact the administration wanted with the tribes. This chaotic arrangement was held together by a telegraph line, which after 1874 linked every post with Noumea. All decisions of any consequence - including, one is supposed to believe, the decision to counterattack warriors attacking the telegraph office - were taken in Noumea.

Although New Caledonia exported gold, copper and antimony in the 1870s, and nickel was exported regularly in the 1880s, exports counted for little in the colony's economy. Until the 1880s the administration's annual contract for beef was worth more than all exports combined. The European colony was devoted to producing or importing goods for the convicts and their guards. The attempt to export sugar foundered on the high costs for land and, ironically in a prison colony, labour. Instead, sugar and rum were the second and third largest government contracts, keeping the sugar mills operating but producing below capacity until the 1880s when the industry collapsed. For the small farmer - Alsace Lorraine refugee, retired soldier, clerk or gendarme - there were many lesser contracts for maize, vegetables, pork and coffee.

After the disruption of the revolt and the repatriation of four thousand political prisoners in 1879, the price of beef halved and runs were bought up and consolidated by a new wave of colonists who arrived in the 1880s with capital. After these economic upheavals it was just feasible to supply tinned beef to the French army, but the colony's cost structure still kept New Caledonia uncompetitive with Australia for beef and other commodities. The transformation had a social cost to the free colonists. The social composition of the graziers - the richest settler group - changed between the 1870s and the 1880s. Until the 1878 revolt they were for the most part retired shopkeepers and NCOs, or English and Irish immigrants who in Australia would have been small farmers. Local lawyers and merchants also owned properties, but these too were small scale - under 500 ha in the settled districts south of Bourail.

A DIFFERENT COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

New Caledonia today is unique in the South Pacific because a high proportion - one third - of the population is European. As in Fiji indigenous Melanesians are less than half the population. That New Caledonia joins Fiji and New Zealand in having an extensive immigrant population is not the result of its history as a French convict colony, but of the absence of tropical diseases, helped also by the presence of mineral wealth. It is safe to say that if the French government had not taken possession of New Caledonia, Britain eventually would have, either to
pre-empt the Australian colonies, as in Fiji, or on their behalf, as in the far less promising colony of Papua. One can even speculate that the immigrant population would have been higher than under the French because the convict colony imposed economic limits on settlement.

As it was the settler population was kept artificially large first supplying the convict system, then exporting beef at above world prices to the French army. New Caledonians were not, however, faced with an onslaught of European settlers, as the Maoris were. The settlers never found a readily exportable crop whose fluctuations on the world commodity market might drive them to bankruptcy but which made large scale immigration and investment periodically attractive.

Other differences created by the convict experience are very important to an understanding of nineteenth century New Caledonia but did not leave a permanent mark.

Unlike other South Pacific islands New Caledonia was not brought under formal colonial authority for reasons arising from existing European contacts such as the need to protect missionaries, to regulate labour recruiting or to systematize the plantation economy. New Caledonia was taken over to be a prison colony, a reason unconnected with the French missionaries and English traders who were the permanent European population before 1853. Until the 1890s there were to be two New Caledonias: a South Pacific trading economy of isolated trader/planters, missionaries and prospectors, and the archipelago of prison camps surrounded by the European farmers and graziers who fed the convicts, soldiers, warders and administrators. The two halves met when the European economy required land and labour, and the settlement was a market for large quantities of coconut oil, pork and chicken supplied by the trading networks along the coast.

When the French administration approached the question of governing New Caledonia, it did so within an overall plan not of conquering the tribes or establishing control over them within a definite period, but of establishing the convict system as quickly as possible in a few secure areas. By Pacific standards they had enormous military and financial resources available to do this. As an illustration, Governor Jean Saisset arrived in 1859 with a company of troops, doubling the garrison but his orders were to retrench; to withdraw the French outpost at Balade in the extreme north and to concentrate on two settlements, Noumea and Canala. Again, the early 1870s saw a rapid expansion of the garrison (from between eight and nine hundred in the late 1860s to sixteen hundred including dependents in the mid 1870s) as the convict system grew. Yet forts in the northern - South Pacific - half of the island were abandoned.

If the strategic objective was not to conquer the tribes the military administrators were tempted to use troops where civilian administrators would have regarded resort to force as an admission of failure. The governor best known for his military intervention beyond the settled areas is Charles Guillian, who in the course of an eight year governorship in the 1860s came to use military assistance in tribal wars to acquire Melanesian allies. His policy developed a crazy momentum of its own until he was recalled in 1870 because he was fighting a campaign in the extreme north out of all proportion to French interests in the area. His successors in the 1870s brought military effort back into line with overall policy.
The net effect of the military administration was to prolong tribal warfare for at least a generation longer than necessary. The administration was not concerned with establishing a civil administration over Melanesians; it was generally preoccupied with the settled areas. There was no attempt even at that simplest of colonial devices, indirect rule. The administration did not consistently support its tribal allies and the military assistance it did give was rarely decisive in tribal wars. During the early 1870s several at least of the favoured sons of the mid 1860s — the Poya and Baye tribes of the Wagap valley and coastal Howailou — took a thrashing from their enemies without the French administration intervening.

The military administration deepened the division, which arose from the pre 1853 contact history, between coastal tribes surrounding a trading port and tribes opposed to them living along the coast but without access to a port. The latter tended to accept missionaries while the port tribes at best were unenthusiastic. Anticlericalism in the administration played its part in maintaining the division, but the administration's support for the large port tribes was probably inevitable given the administration's need for powerful allies. As a result New Caledonia was quite unlike other South Pacific islands, where the new order was more or less united, with the powerful chiefs or leaders who attracted traders being pressed to adopt Christianity and obtaining in return military or naval assistance to back their rule where necessary. New Caledonian coastal tribes divided into Christianized tribes which were generally weak, and powerful warlike pagan tribes which controlled the trading ports and were supported, albeit not consistently, by the administration.

NOTES

1 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 1865.

2 *Annuaire de la Nouvelle Caledonie*, for 1878:72, 165.
THE JAPANESE 1942-1945: A NOTE ON THE SCALE
OF THE DYING

There is no doubt when and why most foreigners went to Melanesia: they went between 1942 and 1945, and their purpose was to make war. Moving south from their bases in Guam and Truk the Japanese of Major-General Tomitaro Horii's South Seas Force began going ashore in Rabaul before dawn on 23 January 1942. With little opposition the Japanese later advanced to the north coast of mainland New Guinea and down through Bougainville to the British Solomon Islands. From mid-1942 a series of battles fought on the Coral Sea, on the Kokoda Trail, at Milne Bay and on Guadalcanal marked the southward limit of Japanese expansion. American and Australian forces drove the Japanese from the central Solomons and from Papua, then island-hopped through the mass of the Japanese troops to fight in the Philippines, Borneo, Tarawa and other islands leading to Iwo Jima and Okinawa. But the fighting did not cease in Melanesia. In 1945 there were probably more Australians in New Guinea than at any other time. It is impossible to calculate the total number of Australian servicemen who went to Melanesia during the war, but over 550,000 Australians served overseas, and nearly all of them at some time were in 'the islands'. The Americans, particularly during the build up to the invasion of the Philippines, had gathered more massive forces of combat and support troops in their Melanesian bases. Somewhere in excess of one million uniformed Americans saw the south Pacific.

David Sissons of the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, generously agreed to use his knowledge of Japanese sources to supply figures on the numbers of Japanese servicemen who fought in Melanesia. Not only do the tables give the magnitude of the Japanese commitment to the area, but they provide a stark indicator of the experience of those who went to the 'South Seas'. Of 392,800 Japanese and auxiliaries who went to Melanesia, 237,500 died there during the war and another 8,800 died before the survivors were repatriated. That is, over 60 per cent of the Japanese who went to Melanesia during the war died there. By contrast about 9,000 Australians died in the island campaigns, and the Australians did most of the ground fighting for the Allies. The most appalling losses suffered by the Japanese were in Lieutenant-General Hatazo Adachi's XVIII Army which fought on the mainland of Papua New Guinea: 13,263 men surrendered from a force once 120,000 strong. In four years more Japanese had died in Papua New Guinea than all other foreigners before or since.

This note does not attempt to assess the Japanese as 'maestia': it is intended to measure a disaster, the scale of which is rarely grasped even by those with a scholarly interest in the area.

H. Nelson
ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF JAPANESE IN MELANESIA
IN WORLD WAR II

Japanese Ministry of Welfare Estimates

The following figures produced by the Japanese Ministry of Welfare (the Department responsible for repatriation and for pensions) are quoted in the official history of the Japanese Army Health Services in World War II published in 1970.

The right-hand column (J + K) gives a convenient guide for the minimum number of Japanese to have been in these areas. The actual numbers would have been higher; because the figures given take no account of troops transferred out of the area to other theatres during the course of the war. (For example, it seems that in 1943 most of the 3,400 troops that escaped from Buna and regrouped at Hopoi were progressively repatriated to Japan.) Similarly, of the troops evacuated from Guadalcanal, although most went to Bougainville and thus remained in the area, a division went to the Philippines and a brigade to Burma.
### Table 1

**Japanese Killed and Survivors — by Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>(E)</td>
<td>(F)</td>
<td>(G)</td>
<td>(H)</td>
<td>(J)</td>
<td>(K)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deaths</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to 14.845</td>
<td>Deaths</td>
<td>15.845</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.845</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Guinea</td>
<td>30,200</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>112,400</td>
<td>140,200</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>15,100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15,200</td>
<td>18,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bismarck Archipelago</td>
<td>57,500</td>
<td>15,900</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>19,700</td>
<td>73,400</td>
<td>38,900</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>10,800</td>
<td>49,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomons</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>62,300</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>63,200</td>
<td>74,600</td>
<td>12,800</td>
<td>24,100</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>36,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>(J)</th>
<th>(K)</th>
<th>(L)</th>
<th>(M)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Guinea</td>
<td>33,800</td>
<td>125,100</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>127,600</td>
<td></td>
<td>158,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bismarck Archipelago</td>
<td>96,400</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>30,500</td>
<td></td>
<td>122,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomons</td>
<td>25,100</td>
<td>86,400</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>88,200</td>
<td></td>
<td>111,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Table 2

**Strength Returns Furnished to Australian Surveillance Parties after the Armistice (Incl. Army, Navy, Civilians, and other auxiliaries)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian New Guinea (mainland)</td>
<td>13,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Britain</td>
<td>97,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Ireland</td>
<td>12,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solomons:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buin and adjacent islands</td>
<td>18,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kleta</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numa Numa</td>
<td>1,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buka</td>
<td>3,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Solomons:</strong></td>
<td>23,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dutch New Guinea:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorong</td>
<td>8,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarmi</td>
<td>5,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manokwari</td>
<td>6,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moemi</td>
<td>1,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babo</td>
<td>937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokas</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fak Fak</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaimana</td>
<td>1,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kekwa</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Dutch New Guinea:</strong></td>
<td>25,926</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. *Except where indicated to the contrary these figures are taken from Advanced AMF Weekly Operations and Intelligence Report No.1 (to 12 October 1945), Appendix Bii (Australian War Memorial, 423/11/168).*

2. *Signal from Australian Liaison Party at Buin to 2 Australian Corps, 10 September 1945 (Australian War Memorial, Savige Papers, 158/1, 'Surrender Commission').*

3. *Report on Surveillance Visit to New Guinea Vogelkop Area, October 1945, Appendix E (Australian War Memorial, 417/1/4).*